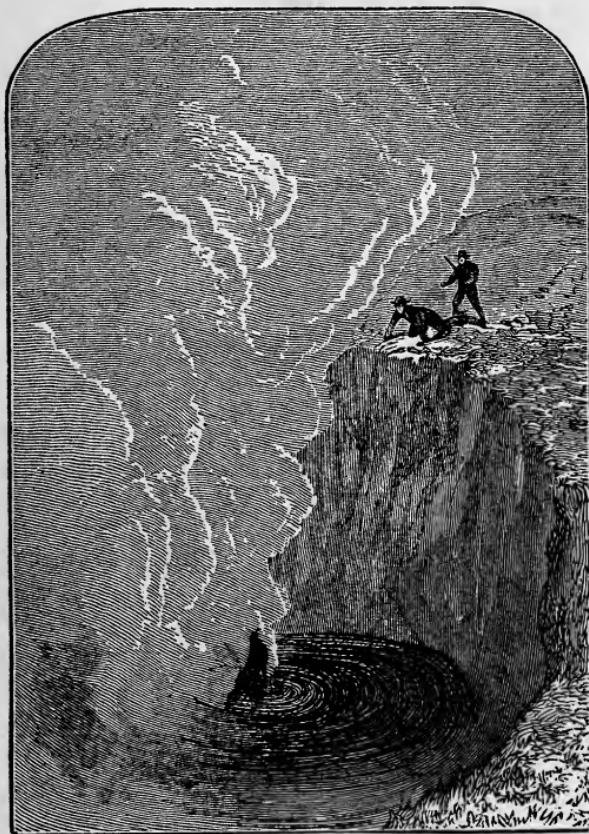


BULANDSHOFDI PASS. — Page 244.

THE ISLAND OF FIRE;

OR,

A Thousand Years of the Old Northmen's Home. 874-1874.



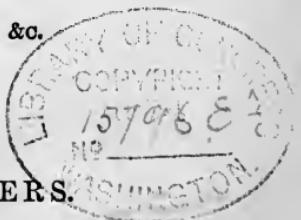
BOILING MUD.

2135
BY REV. P. C. HEADLEY,
AUTHOR OF "LIFE OF THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE," &c.

BOSTON:
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

NEW YORK:
LEE, SHEPARD, & DILLINGHAM.

1875.



Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by
REV. P. C. HEADLEY,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

DL312
H43

BOSTON:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
RAND, AVERY, & CO.

580

4

TO

GEORGE FRANKLIN PINKHAM, ESQ.,

OF WOLLASTON HEIGHTS, IN ANCIENT "VINLAND," WHOSE BEAUTIFUL
HIGHLANDS OF PILGRIM MEMORY, WITH THEIR RURAL,
SUBURBAN HOMES, CONTRAST SO STRONGLY
WITH THE LAVA-SLOPES OF ICELAND,

This Volume is Inscribed by his Friend,

THE AUTHOR.

WOLLASTON HEIGHTS, MASS.,
November, 1874.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	
The Northern Sea-Rovers in the Land of the Moor. — The First Battle. — The Terror of Europe. — Their Arms. — Their Triumphs. — Their Passion for Bloody Encounters. — They discover Iceland	9
CHAPTER II.	
The Northman's Contempt of Death. — Love of Arms. — National Games. — National Worship. — The Gods. — Moral Precepts. — The Historical Odin	18
CHAPTER III.	
Who lived in Northern Europe before the Goths? — Lost History. — A Hundred Languages. — Five a Majority. — The Finns and Lapps	28
CHAPTER IV.	
Two Thousand Years Ago. — The Gift of Fire. — The Lava-Island. — The Green Margins and Valleys. — Traveller's Impressions	31
CHAPTER V.	
Emigration to Iceland. — Farewell Festivals. — Floki Rafna. — A Thousand Years Ago	34
CHAPTER VI.	
Pilgrim Nobles from Norway. — Harald's Price, Four Ounces of Silver. — No Indians to fight. — They have Conflicts. — A Republic made to Order. — Its Constitution. — The Althing. — The First Chief Magistrate	39
CHAPTER VII.	
The Magnificent Capitol. — Built when the Island was made. — The National Court. — Tents and Booths. — The Incendiary. — His Escape	45

CHAPTER VIII.

Embarking for Reykjavik. — Copenhagen. — Rocky Isles. — The Needles and Arch of Portland Head. — Westman Islands. — Columbus visited them. — Bird-Lamps. — First Glimpses. — Impressive Scenes	49
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

Icelanders discover Greenland and America. — The Wonderful History. — Mysterious Disappearance. — The First Yankee born in America, nearly Nine Hundred Years Ago. — Thorfinn returns to Iceland. — Death. — The Widow a Pilgrim and Recluse	58
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER X.

The Sea-Rovers' Ships. — An Illustrious Emigrant. — Interesting Ceremonies. — Tunnlung and the Poet Rafn. — A True Love-Story of the Early Period. — The Beautiful Helga. — An Ancient Poet-Laureate. — He wins the Hand of Helga. — A Gloomy Festival. — A Duel. — A Traitor. — The Sad Ending of a Domestic Tragedy in High Life	66
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XI.

A Gigantic Work. — Thorwaldsen's Funeral. — Common Phrases. — Some Words. — Jack and Jill. — Old Nick	74
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XII.

The Icelander's Home. — Dinner at Vidoe. — Occupations. — Dress. — Education. — Schools. — Pastoral Care. — Sabbath Scenes	80
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XIII.

An Icelandic Funeral. — A Wedding. — Kissing. — Peril of an Ignorant Bride. — The Parish Church Scene. — Religious Character. — Parish Register. — Yule	91
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XIV.

Phenomena of the Heavens. — Mock Suns. — Storm Rings. — Aurora. — Meteors. — Tempests. — Icelander's Wealth. — Domestic Animals. — Swans and Ravens. — The Eider-Duck and its Down. — The Sacred Bird. — Reindeer. — Salmon-Festival. — Sheep-Gathering	100
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

Fairy-Land. — Witchcraft. — Berkserkers. — Superstitions of Domestic Life. — Signs and Omens. — A Ghostly Saga	110
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

Mósfell. — The Ride from Reykjavik — Yankee Doodle. — Beautiful Midnight-Scene. — Sontarek, or Son's Loss.	122
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

Grettir, the Hero and Outlaw of Iceland. — His Birthplace. — On the Sea. — The Red Rovers	133
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sons of an Icelandic Chief in Norway. — Grettir stranded near their Winter Home. — He swims the Fiord. — Burning of the Hostel. — Grettir arrested. — The Trial by Burning Ploughshares. — Returns to Iceland. — His Mother	153
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

Haunted Sheepfolds. — Strange Shepherd. — His Fate. — Grettir succeeds Him. — Terrible Scenes. — Final Struggle. — The Vampire's Grave	166
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XX.

Grettir, in Despair, seeks Counsel. — His Last Refuge. — Outlaw's Isle. — Solitary Life. — Hunted there and killed	180
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

The Christian Era in Iceland. — The Gathering at Thingvalla. — The High Debate. — The Thunder of a Convulsion. — The Great Decision — Golden Age. — Skalds. — An Icelandic Skald at Canute's Court. — Written Constitution. — A Challenge. — Nithing	208
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

The Northmen's Oldest Book of History. — Genius in Iceland. — The Illustrious Trio. — First Printing-Press. — First School. — Bill of Students' Fare. — Study of Poetry. — Its Fabled Origin	216
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

Music. — Education in Common Life. — Preamble of Public Address. — Modern Authors. — The Lord's Prayer in 1585 and in 1874. — National Suicide. — The Reformation	226
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

An Excursion to the Guldbringè Syssel, or Goldbringing District. — The Outfit. — Bessestad. — Boiling Springs. — An Unexplained Wonder. — Guldbringè Syssel. — Stappen. — Reykholt. — Scenes along Paths of Travel	238
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

Excursions among the Mountains, and along the Coast.—The Geyser.—Uncomplaining Resignation.—The Strokr . . . 249

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mount Hecla. — Magnificent View from its Top. — Sturtshellir Cavern. — Its Wild Mythology and Traditions. — Bulandshofdi Pass. — Mud Caldron. — Dettifoss Falls. — Eagle-Tarns. — Grettis Tak. — Thurrisdale. — Fording Rivers. — Dog-Tournament. — Flora 256

CHAPTER XXVII.

Calamities. — Plague. — Black-Death. — Famine. — Pirates. — Volcanoes and Earthquakes. — Effect on the Condition and Character of the People. — Discouragement and Decline. — A Revolution. — A Petitioner 265

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Gathering to the Millennial Jubilee.—The Scenes in the Bay, and Streets of the Capital.—The King's Arrival.—Banquet.—People's Festival.—The Visit to Thingvalla.—A Grand Occasion.—Speeches.—Poetry.—New Ensign.—The Present and Future of Iceland 277

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Millennial at the West.—Norsemen in Prairie-Land.—First Icelandic Service.—The Sermon.—Speeches.—Banners.—My Native Land

SUPPLEMENTAL CHAPTER.

Changes in Customs and Peculiarities.—Different Forms and Pronunciation of Words.—Libraries and Newspapers in Iceland.—Sporting.—Modern National Sacred Melodies . . . 329

ERRATA.

On p. 48, ninth line from top, read "the enclosure," for "just below it."

On p. 80, sixth line under Chapter XII., "Bjarni" should be "Bjarg."

P R E F A C E.

THIS volume was suggested by a contribution to “The Cornhill Magazine” upon Iceland, in connection with the then approaching Millennial Jubilee.

In seeking historical light upon a subject respecting which the writer confesses he was in the dark, very few works could be found outside of our largest libraries ; and those, were imported books.

It was the first thought to write a small volume for young people especially, and the preparation of it was commenced. But the field of history opened so rich in material, that the work grew to its present size and style, instead of the juvenile narrative proposed. And if the reader finds, in the imperfect narrative, a tithe of the fascinating interest afforded in gathering the facts, nothing more, in this regard, could be desired.

Historical accuracy has been kept constantly in view, with no other additions to authentic records than supplying the natural links, necessary to make the proper connections, and give to skeleton outline lifelike form.

In historical fragments reaching so far back, and concerning a country so remote, there will necessarily be some unsettled and disputed points. When these have been met, the view or statement apparently the most in harmony with known facts has been accepted. And it

is to be borne in mind, in reading the journals of tourists, that in few countries are the landscape-views, and the enthusiasm of travellers, more affected by the conditions of the weather than in Iceland. Consequently, descriptions will widely differ; and a superficial knowledge of a people whose external life is sometimes unattractive reveals itself in unjust criticisms.

Iceland is an exhaustless study; and no "flying visit," or brief reading, will give any proper estimate of it and its inhabitants. The authorities consulted are, Baronet Mackenzie's Journal, a remarkably clear and appreciative volume; Prof. Baring-Gould's narrative, very readable, and finely illustrated; the Journals of Commander Forbes, R. N., and Sir W. J. Hooker, both valuable narratives of personal observation; Pliny Miles's chatty pages, originally published in England; Lord Dufferin's interesting Letters from High Latitudes; the standard work of that eminent jurist and diplomatist, Henry Wheaton, LL.D., some time *chargé d'affaires* to Copenhagen; and Northern Antiquities, by Bishop Percy.

To avoid any misunderstanding, it is proper to add, that not until the manuscript was in the hands of the publishers, was our attention directed to a work for young people, entitled, "Off for the Geysers;" whose sketches were evidently substantially from the great work of Baring-Gould.

For the account of the Millennial Jubilee, celebrated early in August last, America is indebted mainly to Bayard Taylor's foreign correspondence of "The New-York Tribune," and "The New-York Herald's" letters from Dr. Hayes, which were also very valuable, and marked especially by accurate statements. "The Nation," with its usual reliability, gave, in advance of the Jubilee, a correct summary of the new Icelandic Constitution. "Harper's

Magazine" contained the first and only illustrated sketches by an American, so far as we know, of the island. We selected from Longfellow's Poetry of Europe, the fine translation of the "Death-Song of Regner."

The articles of any length besides, in the periodical press, to which attention was called, were, an editorial of great interest in "The New-York Evening Post;" an able letter from a Fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries at Copenhagen, to "The New-York Evangelist;" and the republication, in part, by "The Boston Transcript," of Mr. Byrce's finished contribution to "The Cornhill Magazine," Impressions of Iceland.

Very recently, we have seen an interesting statement of the evidence of the Norse discovery of America, entitled, "America not discovered by Columbus," from the pen of Prof. R. B. Anderson of the University of Wisconsin; with whom we have had important correspondence.

We are also under obligations to Prof. Jon Bjarnasson of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, a native Icelander, for fresh facts touching his island home.

To Willard Small, Esq., of the literary force of Messrs. Lee & Shepard, more is due than to the pen or voice of any other person. His familiarity with Norse literature and history, and genial freedom in the communication of his accurate information, has been of the highest value.

We must acknowledge our dependence, for books of reference, upon the Boston Public Library, whose glory is second only to that of her free schools; and also to the accomplished and obliging librarian of the Boston Athenæum.

In this connection we may add, that the records we have of Iceland clearly show, that, could the country and its population have made it possible, Iceland would have more nearly resembled our own in general culture, than

any other in Europe or in the world ; at least, out of England. There would have been institutions corresponding to our own public schools, and other educational opportunities throughout our growing sisterhood of States.

The tales from the Sagas, of which the outline of Grettir's romantic and tragic career is the principal one, were taken, with the exception of a portion of Sir Walter Scott's earliest translation, and a few other extracts, from the free English readings of Baring-Gould ; condensed, as far as practicable, and retaining the graphic power of the stories. On account of this necessary contraction, and not knowing, in nearly all cases, who was the original translator, quotation-marks, as a rule, have been omitted.

This volume is intended to cover the whole field of Icelandic history. Whatever incompleteness in detail time for a more exhaustive and elaborate history might have supplied, the author may hope, at least, as the first American book, excepting a reprint, on this distant, yet grand old Iceland, it may to some extent deepen the interest in the people, and add to the popular knowledge of a country so worthy of a better acquaintance.

THE ISLAND OF FIRE.

CHAPTER I.

The Northern Sea-Rovers in the Land of the Moor.—The First Battle.—The Terror of Europe.—Their Arms.—Their Triumphs.—Their Passion for Bloody Encounters.—They discover Iceland.

“**S**IGNAL-FIRES on the hills of Carmona!” This awakening shout from the lips of Bexir, a veteran Moorish warrior, rang along the streets of ancient Cordova, in the twilight of a September day, 844. The alarm-bells pealed forth the call to arms.

A fleet of the sea-rovers of the north had made their descent, like a falling thunderbolt, upon the coast of Spain. They swept along the banks of the Tagus, pillaging the unresisting people, paralyzed with terror. They then sailed up the Guadalquivir, and entered beautiful Seville, whose soldiers soon retired before the foe, who, to their excited fancy, were armed magicians.

Bexir, at King Alderahman’s command, hastened preparations to meet the unknown enemy. With flashing arms and armor, his columns marched to the waiting flotilla. With a favoring wind, they

sailed down the broad current, whose banks were green with richest verdure, and fragrant with flowers and fruits.

The Northmen, from the valleys near arctic frost, are ready to receive the Arabian conquerors of the warm, rich plains of the south. For the first time the fair-haired, fresh-visaged sea-rovers of Scandinavia meet the swarthy, turbaned Moors in deadly combat. Swords and lances cross; and confronting eyes gleam with the passion for carnage, inspired by religious frenzy.

To the Northmen's faith, the air above them is filled with the shadowy forms of Valkyrior, the virgins, who, in the palace of their deity, wait on departed heroes, and preside over battles. They turn the tide of victory, and select for Odin the warriors who are to be slain. The devotees of Allah and his prophet see, in the sky arching them, the "dark-eyed houris waving their green kerchiefs" to welcome the dauntless heroes to the paradise of sensual joys, when they fall upon the field of honor.

But no decisive victory followed the terrific battle. The Norsemen carried away spoils and captives, and, unmolested, descended the Guadalquivir to the sea, their boundless home. Writes an old chronicler, "Among those captives, we may picture many a weeping damsel, who, amidst the frozen regions of the north, would long sigh in vain for the sunny plains and vine-covered hills of Andalusia."

This expedition was one of countless similar forays, which made these piratical corsairs from Northern Europe the terror of a continent. They knew

no fear, and gloried in deeds of reckless daring and peril. They pillaged Paris, Bordeaux, Orleans, and nearly every other city of France and adjacent provinces accessible by water; also the borders of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

They would suddenly appear before a town, land, and march through it, bearing away the spoils, then weigh anchor, and disappear with their booty. Their galleys cut the foam, till the shadow of some grim promontory, guarding the entrance to a rocky isle, fell upon their fluttering canvas.

Once within their natural Gibraltar, they could laugh, over their foaming goblets, at the threatened revenge of plundered nations. They also haunted the islands north and west of Denmark, which was itself the earliest home of the most sanguinary free-booters.

In the summer of 860, sixteen years after the battle of Carmona, Naddod, a famous sea-rover, spread his sails for the Faroe Isles. Suddenly a terrible gale struck the brave navigator's vessel, and swept it along the path of the storm. In vain the helm was grasped by a strong, untrembling hand: the bark drifted away upon unknown waters.

With the returning calm he caught sight of lofty summits, and sought a landing-place among the foam-lashed rocks at their feet. Ascending a height, he gazed upon the drear landscape, to find a human form or habitation. In vain his anxious eye scanned the horizon of snow mantling the mountains, and falling down their rugged sides beyond the view. He hastened to the beach, and, re-embarking, called

the new country Snae-land, or Snow-land, from the most striking feature of the solitude, which, by accident, he had discovered. This was Iceland.

Four years afterwards Garder Svarson, a Swedish sea-rover, by a similar experience lost his way, and sailed to and around the same strange, wild land. He found, with delight, green, inviting margins by the inlets, and valleys among the rugged hills; and named the country after himself, Garder's-holm, or Garder's Isle. There were no spoils, no strong men and fair women, to carry away; and he returned to Norway, with only the story of his discovery.

But these stern Norsemen had both the savage and the tender side of our humanity, which are put in vivid contrast in a little love-tragedy composed over a thousand years ago. It is translated freely, in flowing English rhyme; and nothing besides, perhaps, in the same compass, contains so many graphic pictures of old Scandinavian warrior-life, as the

SONG OF REGNER, KING OF DENMARK.

He heard that Thora, the daughter of a chieftain, was held in captivity by an enormous serpent, and resolved to deliver her. Clothing himself with shaggy trousers, so that the serpent's fangs and venom could not reach his flesh, he sought and saved her. He was called, ever after, Regner Lodbrok, or *Shaggy-Brogues*. Later, when upon one of his expeditions, he was captured, and thrown into a dungeon to die by the bite of serpents.

We introduce the story by giving the first verse

in the original language, which has been that of Iceland for a thousand years, with a literal translation.

Hjuggum vér med Hjörvi:
 Hitt var ei fyrir laungu,
 er á Gauílandi Gengum
 at Grafvitnis * mordi;
 THá fengum vér THórv,
 THadan hétu mik fyrdar,
 thá er Lýngál † um Lagda'k,
 Lodbrok: at thví vígi
 STakk ek á STordar-lykkju ‡
 STáli bjartra mála.

Hew'd me with the Hanger!
 Hard upon the time 'twas,
 when in Gothlandia Going
 to Give death to the serpent,
 THen obtained we THora,
 THence have warriors called me,
 the Ling-eel since I Laid low,
 Lodbrok: at that carnage
 STuck I the STealthy monster
 With STeel of finest temper.

THE DEATH-SONG OF REGNER LODBROCK.

WE smote with swords; nor long, before
 In arms I reached the Gothic shore,
 To work the loathly serpent's death.
 I slew the reptile of the heath;
 My prize was Thora; from that fight,
 'Mongst warriors am I Lodbrock hight.
 I pierced the monster's scaly side
 With steel, the soldier's wealth and pride.

We smote with swords; in early youth
 I fought by Ery's billowy mouth.
 Where high the echoing basnites rung
 To the hard javelin's iron tongue,
 The wolf and golden-footed bird
 Gleaned plenteous harvest of the sword.
 Dark grew the ocean's swollen water;
 The raven waded deep in slaughter.

We smote with swords; ere twenty years
 Were numbered, in the din of spears

* Used for serpent.

† Ling-eel, or heath adder.

‡ Stord, the earth; lykkja, a clasp, lock, buckle; hence a clasp or ring of the earth, and, figuratively, a serpent.

I reared my armèd hand, and spread
 The tide of battle fierce and red.
 Eight earls my weighty arm subdued,
 Eastward by Dwina's icy flood;
 There the gaunt falcon lacked not food.
 The sweat of death distained the wave;
 The army tined * its warriors brave.

We smote with swords; fierce Hedin's queen
 'Mid the hot storm of war was seen,
 When Helsing's youth to Odin's hall
 We bade, and garred her prowess fall.
 Our vessels ploughed through Ifa's flood;
 The arrows stung; the stream was blood.
 Brands grated on the mail; and through
 Cleft shields the death-fraught lances flew.

We smote with swords; none fled, I trow,
 Ere on the masted galley's prow
 Bold Herrand fell; no fairer earl
 Did e'er his bellying sail unfurl
 On winged steeds, that spurn the main,
 Cleaving the seafowl's lonely reign;
 No lord in stour † more widely feared
 To distant port his vessel steered.
 That glorious chieftain's glowing heart
 In fight aye sought the foremost part.

We smote with swords; in fierce affray
 The warriors cast their shields away:
 By rifling steel with fury driven
 Many a fearless breast was riven;
 And, 'midst the din, from Skarpa's rock
 Echoed the falchion's sounding shock.
 The iron orbs with blood were dyed,
 Ere sunk King Rafen's youthful pride.
 Hot streaming from each valiant head
 Sweat on coats of mail was shed

* Lost. † War.

We smote with swords; near Inder's shore
A sumptuous meal the ravens tore;
Nor carnage lacked to glut those steeds
On which the sorcerer's Vala speeds.
'Twas hard to 'scape unharmed that day:
When peered the sun's first dawning ray,
Shafts saw I starting from the string;
The bent bow made the metal ring.

We smote with swords; what fairer fate
Can e'er the sons of men await,
Than long amid the battle's blast
To front the storm, and fall at last?
Who basely shuns the gallant strife
Nathless must lose his dastard life.
When waves of war conflicting roll,
'Tis hard to whet the coward soul
To deeds of worth; the timid heart
Will never act a warrior's part.

We smote with swords; this deem I right
Youth to youth in sturdy fight
Each his meeting falchion wield;
Thane to thane should never yield.
Such was aye the soldier's boast,
Firm to face the adverse host.
Boldest, who prize fair maidens' love,
Must in the din of battle move.

We smote with swords; I hold that all
By destiny or live or fall:
Each his certain hour awaits;
Few can 'scape the ruling Fates.
When I scattered slaughter wide,
And launched my vessels to the tide,
I deemed not, I, that Ella's blade
Was doomed at last to bow my head;
But hewed in every Scottish bay
Fresh banquets for the beasts of prey.

We smote with swords; my parting breath
Rejoices in the pang of death.
Where dwells fair Balder's father dread,
The board is decked, the seats are spread!
In Fiolner's court, with costly cheer,
Soon shall I quaff the foaming beer,
From hollow skulls of warriors slain!
Heroes ne'er in death complain;
To Vider's hall I will not bear
The dastard words of weak despair.

We smote with swords; their falchions bright
(If well they kenned their father's plight,
How, venom-filled, a viperous brood
Have gnawed his flesh, and lapped his blood)
Thy sons would grasp, Aslauga dear,
And vengeful wake the battle here.
A mother to my bairns I gave
Of sterling worth, to make them brave.

We smote with swords; cold death is near,
My rights are passing to my heir.
Grim stings the adder's forked dart;
The vipers nestle in my heart.
But soon, I wot, shall Vider's wand
Fixed in Ella's bosom, stand.
My youthful sons with rage will swell,
Listening how their father fell:
Those gallant boys in peace unbroken
Will never rest, till I be wroken.

We smote with swords; where javelins fly,
Where lances meet, and warriors die,
Fifty times and one I stood
Foremost on the field of blood.
Full young I 'gan distain my sword,
Nor feared I force of adverse lord;
Nor deemed I then that any arm
By might or guile could work me harm.

Me to their feast the gods must call;
The brave man wails not o'er his fall.

Cease, my strain! I hear a voice
From realms where martial souls rejoice:
I hear the maids of slaughter call,
Who bid me hence to Odin's hall:
High seated in their blest abodes
I soon shall quaff the drink of gods.
The hours of life have glided by:
I fall; but smiling shall I die.

CHAPTER II.

The Northman's Contempt of Death. — Love of Arms. — National Games. — National Worship. — The Gods. — Moral Precepts. — The Historical Odin.

“LAUGHING shall I die,” might be rendered this last plaintively cheerful note of Regner’s dying strain. This proud defiance of “the last enemy” was the boast of the Northmen: love of arms, and Odin’s worship, were the sources of this scornful indifference to suffering and death.

The martial spirit, and preparation for warlike achievements, were cultivated in their national games. These were not played on some smooth common, nor upon the green carpet of a newly-mown field, amid applauding spectators. The very boys swung the falchion and battle-axe in naked combat; they wrestled as if in a rage; were pitted against each other, in making frightful leaps over deep chasms, from dizzy cliffs; and purposely endured hunger and cold, to harden their bodies.

Mothers, many of whom were born in camps, and all of them in the sight and sound of arms, taught their sons there was no glory like that of the successful warrior. What an impression upon him and his companions must have been made by the honors often conferred upon a boy of fifteen years, who had shown manly prowess!

Before his kindred and assembled heroes, a chief presented him a burnished sword, a lance, and a buckler. It was his welcome to the ranks of the braves.

In the quiet valleys, and on the shaded slopes of Scandinavian lands, rose the temples of their principal deity, Odin. Not only did animals slain for sacrifice lie bleeding, but human victims stood by the altars where the sacred fire was burning. The consecrated brazen vessels were lying before them, the largest of which received their blood as it followed the burnished knife. The priest said to each in turn, "I devote thee to Odin ;" or, " I send thee to Odin." The flowing life-current was then sprinkled upon the altar, the temple, the grove, and the people.

The victims were selected from captives taken in battle, or slaves in time of peace, excepting in some great emergency : then to escape from dire calamity, or avert threatened disaster, offerings were taken from families of the nobility, and even the king himself was sometimes immolated. At the grand nine-days' festival in the magnificent temple at Upsal, nine men, each day, yielded up their lives.

The Northmen transferred their love of martial glory to their gods. Odin became the "father of slaughter," mingling in the strife, and encouraging the warriors, while his Valkyrior selected for him those chosen to be slain.

The contending hosts alike invoked his aid, consecrating in advance a certain number to him, which he was to designate, and welcome to Valhalla.

Yet they called him their creator and father. No

greater contrast is possible, than between a faith so sanguinary and merciless, and that of the founders of New England, with their open Bible, and “ freedom to worship God.”

Frigga was the wife of Odin.

Thor, who was the original deity of the north, became next to Odin in power, and sometimes was called his son.

The badge of his greatness was a massive mallet, which, after it was hurled at a foe, flew back again to his hand armed with gauntlets. He wore also, a magic girdle, which renewed his strength whenever exhausted.

Listening to the strains from the “Song of the Prophetess,” in the poetic Edda, we shall learn from the Northmen the wild fictions of their mythology ; and yet only a people of native genius, and high type of manhood, could have devised it.

“ In the day-spring of the ages, there was neither earth below, nor heaven above, to be distinguished. The whole was only one vast abyss, without herb and without seeds. The sun had then no palace, the stars knew not their dwelling-places, the moon was ignorant of her power. After this there was a luminous, burning, flaming world towards the south ; and another, nebulous and dark, toward the north. From the latter world flowed out incessantly into the abyss that lay between the two, torrents of venom ; which, in proportion as they removed far away from their source, congealed in their falling into the abyss, and so filled it with scum and ice. Thus was the abyss, by little and little, quite filled ; but there

remained within it a light and immovable air, and thence exhaled icy vapors. Then a warm breath coming from the south melted those vapors, and formed of them living drops, whence was born the giant Ymer. Whilst he slept, an extraordinary sweat under his armpits produced a male and a female, whence is sprung the race of the giants, — a race evil and corrupt as well as Ymir, their author. Another race was brought forth, which formed alliances with that of the giant Ymir: this was called the family of Bor, so named from the second of that family, who was the father of Odin. The sons of Bor slew the giant Ymir; and the blood ran from his wounds in such abundance, that it caused a general inundation, wherein perished all the giants, excepting one, who, saving himself in a bark, escaped with all his family. Then a new world was formed. The sons of Bor, or the gods, dragged the body of the giant in the abyss, and of it made the earth. The sea and rivers were composed of his blood; the earth, of his flesh; the great mountains, of his bones; the rocks, of his teeth and of splinters of his bones broken.

“ They made of his skull the vault of heaven, which is supported by four dwarfs, named North, South, East, and West. They fixed there tapers to enlighten, and assigned to other fires certain spaces which they were to run through, some of them in heaven, others under the heaven. The days were distinguished, and the years were numbered.

“ They made the earth round, and surrounded it with the deep ocean, upon the outward banks of which they placed the giants. One day, as the sons

of Bor, or the gods, were taking a walk, they found two pieces of wood floating upon the water ; these they took, and out of them made a man and woman. The eldest of the gods gave them life and souls ; the second, motion and knowledge ; the third, the gift of speech, hearing, and sight, to which he added beauty and raiment. From this man and this woman, named Ask and Embla, is descended the race of men who are permitted to inhabit the earth.

“ Those only whose blood had been shed in battle might aspire to the pleasures which Odin prepared for them in Valhalla. The pleasures which they expected after death show us plainly enough what they relished during life. The heroes, says the Edda, who are received into the palace of Odin, have every day the pleasure of arming themselves, of passing in review, of ranging themselves in order of battle, and of cutting one another in pieces ; but, as soon as the hour of repast approaches, they return on horseback, all safe and sound, to the hall of Odin, and fall to eating and drinking. Though the number of them cannot be counted, the flesh of the boar Sachrimnir is sufficient for them all : every day it is served up at table, and every day it is renewed again entire. Their beverage is ale and mead : one single goat, whose milk is excellent mead, furnishes enough of that liquor to intoxicate all the heroes. Odin alone drinks wine for his entire liquor. A crowd of virgins wait upon the heroes at table, and fill their cups as fast as they empty them.”

Such was the faith which rendered all the inhabitants of the north of Europe intrepid, and which

made them not only defy, but even seek with ardor, the most cruel deaths. Accordingly King Regner Lodbrok, when he was dying, far from uttering groans, or forming complaints, could sing with joy: "We are cut to pieces with swords; but this fills me with joy, when I think of the feast that is preparing for me in Odin's palace. Quickly, quickly seated in the splendid habitation of the gods, we shall drink beer out of the skulls of our enemies. A brave man fears not to die. I shall utter no timorous words as I enter the hall of Odin." This fanatical hope derived additional force from the ignominy affixed to every kind of death but such as was of a violent nature, and from the fear of being sent after such an exit into Niflheim. This was a place consisting of nine worlds, reserved for those that died of disease or old age. Hela, or Death, there exercised her despotic power; her palace was Anguish; her table Famine; her waiters were Slowness and Delay; the threshold of her door was Precipice; her bed Care; she was livid and ghastly pale, and her very looks inspired horror.

"Yggdrasill was the mighty ash, under which the gods assembled in council. Its branches cover the surface of the earth, its top reaches to the highest heaven; it is supported by three vast roots, one of which extends to the ninth world. An eagle, whose piercing eye discovers all things, perches upon its branches. Between his eyes is a hawk, who hears the faintest whisper. A squirrel is continually running up and down it, to bring news; while a parcel of serpents, fastened to the trunk, endeavor to destroy

him. From under one of the roots, runs a fountain, wherein wisdom lies concealed. From a neighbouring spring (of past things) three virgins are continually drawing a precious water for the tree, which preserves the beauty of the ash, and, after having refreshed its leaves, falls back again to the earth, where it forms the dew from which the bees make their honey. These three virgins always keep under the ash; and it is they who dispense the days and ages of men. Every man hath a Destiny appropriated to himself, who determines the duration and events of his life. But the three Destinies of more especial note are Urd, the past, Verdandi, the present, and Skuld, the future. Loki was the Satan of these idolaters, the calumniator of the gods, the grand contriver of deceit and frauds, the reproach of gods and men. He is beautiful in figure, but his mind is evil, and his inclination inconstant. Nobody renders him divine honors. He surpasses all mortals in the arts of perfidy and craft."

But it is a curious fact, that from their gods came several names of the days of the week. Odin's-day is Wednesday, Thor's-day is Thursday, and the name of Frigga is immortalized in Friday.

Some excellent precepts had those idolaters, while others were of doubtful morality. The following are a few of the former:—

“ Consider and examine well all your doors before you venture to stir abroad; for he is exposed to continual danger whose enemies lie in ambush concealed in his court.”

“ To the guest who enters your dwelling with

frozen knees, give the warmth of your fire: he who hath travelled over the mountains hath need of food and well-dried garments."

"Offer water to him who sits down at your table, for he hath occasion to cleanse his hands; and entertain him honorably and kindly, if you would win from him friendly words, and a grateful return."

"He who travelleth hath need of wisdom. One may do at home whatsoever one will; but he who is ignorant of good manners will only draw contempt upon himself, when he comes to sit down with men well instructed."

"He who goes to a feast where he is not expected either speaks with a lowly voice, or is silent. He listens with his ears, and is attentive with his eyes; by this he acquires knowledge and wisdom."

"A man can carry with him no better provision for his journey than the strength of understanding. In a foreign country, this will be of more use to him than treasures, and will introduce him to the table of strangers."

"Many are thought to be knit in the ties of sincere kindness; but, when it comes to the proof, how much are they deceived! Slander is the common vice of the age. Even the host backbites his guest."

"One's own home is the best home, though never so small. Every thing one eats at home is sweet. He who lives at another man's table is often obliged to wrong his palate."

"Riches pass away like the twinkling of an eye: of all friends they are the most inconstant. Flocks perish, relations die, friends are not immortal, you

will die yourself ; but I know one thing alone that is out of the reach of fate, and that is the judgment which is passed upon the dead."

" The heart alone knows what passes within the heart ; and that which betrays the soul is the soul itself. There is no malady or sickness more severe than not to be content with one's lot."

It is evident from these fragments, that, everywhere and always, detraction is the " common vice of the age," and the sentiment, if not the song, of " Sweet Home," is equally universal.

The only light which history sheds on the origin of this mythology, which for ages was cherished by the Northmen, is reflected from the shadows of antiquity.

One day in that fabled past, the flames of Odin's *cremation* rose in Sigtuna.

Thousands, according to the only records of Norway, the Yuglinj, were gathered to witness the burning of the body of their idolized chieftain, henceforth to receive divine honors.

He had led them from the far plains and steppes of Asia, across Europe. Conquering as they went, they spread themselves over the northern lands, groping their way even to the islands of that drear ocean, rolling away to the mysterious pole. Odin had appropriated, according to custom, the name of his own deity ; and was so gifted, and victorious in battle, that in turn, upon his death, he became the object of supreme worship.

He had introduced cremation, an origin worthy of its unnatural, and therefore repulsive disposition

of the dead ; and it was fitting that he should be honored by a national burning and festival.

When he found death by disease approaching, the Northmen's horror, he inflicted nine stabs in a circle upon himself, declaring, with ebbing life, that he was going to Asgard, to enjoy an eternal banquet with the gods.

That he founded a new religion, is history ; excepting this, we cannot trace his career in the uncertain light of the Norwegian story of the nation's origin, and its deity. But we have the belief, ceremonies, and sacrifices ; which, more than any other national annals, reflect the true character of the people.

CHAPTER III.

Who lived in Northern Europe before the Goths? — Lost History. — A Hundred Languages. — Five a Majority. — The Finns, and Lapps.

WHOSE flocks and herds grazed upon the boundless fields of Northern Europe before those of the invading Goths?

However unsatisfactory the answer, the very attempt to find one sheds fascinating light, by contrast, upon their lordly neighbors, who created kingdoms, and peopled islands, until the Russian Empire itself rose beneath their forming energy.

We have looked out upon the ocean at night, and caught, in the moonlit distance, glimpses of wandering ships, beyond which the gleams of the weird beams went out in total darkness.

The ancient races of Europe, among which were the old Greeks and Romans, are those barks on the edge of deepest night, in the past.

That they all came from the plains and steppes of Asia, confirming the simple story of Moses in the inspired annals, is evident. There, in that mysterious Eastern Continent, the mighty generations succeeded each other just like the waves of that deep the eye cannot scan, leaving no trace behind.

“When we strive to pierce the mysterious gloom

that shrouds an infant world, it is the heaven-aspiring peaks of Central Asia (Himalay, or Heavenly Mountains), that we first discern illumined by those primeval myths, which, like dazzling coruscations of a polar winter, play fantastically amidst the night of ages, ere history's dawn has yet streaked time's hoary horizon with the earliest ray.

“And when, at length, the opening morn dispels these visionary splendors, we behold the luxuriant plains of the Ganges, occupied by an intelligent people with its sages and philosophers.”

A marvellous race indeed are these Hindoos, among whom English and American missionaries have carried the light of the only Book of God's revelation to mankind.

Prof. Seelye of Amherst College, one of our noblest Christian scholars and educators, recently gathered around him their most gifted Brahmins, while he convincingly unfolded to them the religion of the Cross.

In unanswerable statements to them, and upon his return to this country, in the press, he made very clear the measureless contrast between the most civilized heathenism, in the very texture of society, to say nothing of the spiritual darkness shrouding all the relations of mankind to God, and the Christianity of the Bible, even in its so partially appreciated and resisted power.

Think of the variety of tongues since the Babel-builders left their unfinished tower, when we know that now nearly one hundred different dialects have their records in literature. There is another wonder-

ful fact ; that five of these languages represent the nations who have ruled the destinies of the world : the Hindostanic, in Southern Asia ; the Iranic, or ancient Persian ; the Hellenic, or Grecian ; the Romanic, or Latin ; and the Teutonic, which has been that of Northern Europe, including the Scandinavian, German, and English. The Scandinavian was spoken by the four great branches of the race, who peopled the countries abutting on the Baltic,—the Northmen, Swedes, Danes, and the Gardar, or settlers in Northern Russia.

We have, therefore, to learn a hundred tongues to read every thing written ; but five will answer the purpose, for the study of the original literature of earth's mighty realms of human power and glory.

Of the tribes, and their languages, at the north, who for ages lived unmolested by foreign foes, but had almost no influence upon the great world's life and progress, we have only the vaguest hints. Tshuds is a name by which they have been historically known ; and the Finns and Lapps are their remnants. The habits and general intelligence of these two tribes are very similar. They are more like the negroes in their simple, trustful natures, and their superstitions, than the Northmen, on whose boundaries they have lived for untold centuries.

CHAPTER IV.

Two Thousand Years Ago. — The Gift of Fire. — The Lava-Island. — The Green Margins and Valleys. — Traveller's Impressions.

TWO thousand years ago! No island then may have broken the sweep of the ocean across the Arctic Circle, west of Norway.

We have no data from which to learn when Iceland came from the depths beneath the sea; but how, is written all over it, in characters as legible as inscriptions on monumental marble.

The signal, in the ocean-solitudes, of a war of the elements, was an earthquake-shock, convulsing the sea for hundreds of miles around the centre of the tremendous explosion at hand.

With the increasing agitation of the waters, their surface became mottled with foam, and discolored by the matter cast up from the foundations on which, for unnumbered ages, they had rested. The rising billows met like armed hosts, and their roar was louder than fiercest human battle. Dense columns of steam rolled upward; glowing tides of pumice followed, lighting up with their glare the silent northern sky.

Between these, great showers of cinders were falling through the eddying air, all "heralding the approach of the crater's mouth." Then rose the rim

CHAPTER V.

Emigration to Iceland.—Farewell Festivals.—Floki Rafna.—A Thousand Years Ago.

ABOLD and famous viking, Floki Rafna (that is, Floki of the ravens), who, Icelandic tradition says, was a descendant of “Goa, a sister of Nor, the fabled founder of the kingdom of Norway,” was seized, in 865, with a desire to emigrate to Iceland. He gathered his family and followers to his temple, and celebrated the sacrificial banquet. This temple, owned by the chieftain whose retainers were numbered by hundreds, was nothing more than a large hall for feasting, with a small recess at the end for worship. In cold weather a fire was built in the centre of the hall upon a lava floor, and its smoke escaped through openings in the roof, which served also as the only windows. The chieftain took his seat upon a rude throne opposite the fire on the southerly side, between two columns bearing inscriptions in Runic letters, the written alphabet, such as it was, invented by the Northmen. Opposite him, on a similar, yet inferior seat of honor, according to custom, was his principal guest. To the right and left, on benches against the wall, sat his retainers and servants. The offerings of cattle and sheep were slain, and their flesh thrown into a caldron

over the blazing fire. When cooked, it was passed around, beginning with the chief, and ending with his humblest menial. After they were satiated with the meat, they imbibed freely a kind of ale. With the rising hilarity, these revellers threw at each other, across the hall, the bones they had picked. Just imagine the yet warm, greasy missiles flying back and forth, in that “dim, religious light” of Odin’s hall!

This sacrificing and feasting lasted several days. At the close Floki took into the recess where stood the altar, three ravens, and consecrated them, in the name of his god, to his own guidance on the voyage; then removed them, with the sacred columns of his temple-throne, to the ship ready to receive him.

Without a tear, but a fond, lingering gaze, he watched the dark hill-tops of his native Norway, as they sank below the horizon, and he became a wanderer, in search of that strange land, somewhere in the untravelled northern waters. It seems that he first touched the Faroe Isles. Trusting to the instinct of the ravens, when he thought he might be nearer Iceland than their shores, he released one, to mark its flight, as the compass by which to steer his ship. The bird showed no hesitation respecting his course, but flew straight for the land which he had left. A few days later, another black messenger was sent forth upon the ocean. The bird seemed bewildered, and, after an uncertain skyward flight, gave up the attempt to find a resting-place, and returned to the ship. Pursuing his course undaunted, Floki uncaged the third raven, who flew

in the direction he was sailing, unmistakably indicating that the island was near.

Soon after, he dropped anchor within the arms of a fiord, or inlet. The succeeding winter was intensely severe, filling the bays with ice, and burying the land by frequent snow-storms for months. His cattle died, and his brave heart sighed for fatherland. Setting sail, he named his abandoned place, of so brief abode, Island, which in his own tongue was Iceland ; because the blockade of icebergs, from the shores of Greenland, sometimes so walled it in, that the ocean could not be seen over their crystal heights.

But the Norwegian heroes were not easily disheartened, nor were they afraid of perils and suffering. In 870 Ingolf, threatened with vengeance by the kindred of an adversary he had slain, spent a winter in Iceland, and liked it so well, that he determined, upon his return, to raise a colony, and go back. He was urged to this, like our Pilgrim Fathers, by oppression. Harald * Haarfagr had taken the reins of power over the chieftains of Norway, and increased their taxes. These old liberty-loving sea-rovers rebelled against this tyranny ; and families banded together to seek a home in Iceland. Their illustrious leader, Ingolf, set sail in his dragon-headed galley, the "Mayflower" of 874, for Iceland.

Approaching the land, he threw into the sea the sacred columns, to learn the will of the gods by the place to which they drifted. But they floated out of sight ; and he sought a harbor in the southern coast, at a point which still bears the name of Ingolfshödi.

* The Fair-haired.

Afterwards, when the columns were found by his slaves, he removed to them at once, and founded the present capital, Reykjavik. His brother-in-law Hjörleif landed, and settled at a place on the south coast, which is to this day called Hjörleifshöfði. Being decoyed into a wood by his Irish slaves in the following spring, in search of a bear, he was treacherously murdered by them, together with the rest of the company. The slaves fled with his goods to the Westman Isles, named after them, but were pursued and killed by Ingolf. In his lament over the dead body of his friend, who had ceased to honor pagan altars, as it is recorded in the Sagas, he is made to say; “What an ignoble thing for so excellent a man to fall by the hand of vile slaves! But such must ever be the fate of those who will not sacrifice to the gods.”

This was a thousand years ago. Our fatherland, the British empire of to-day, was then only a respectable kingdom, formed out of seven petty sovereignties.

America was one vast, “howling wilderness.” The mariner’s compass, and the art of printing, were unknown for centuries later; and gunpowder, without which modern armies would not know how to fight, had never flashed on the brain of the old Chinaman or Arab who gave his bright discovery to the world.

The most ancient Icelandic history, the *Landnamabok*, tells us of crucifixes, bells, and other relics of a people from Ireland, who had embraced Christianity, called Papas, from an island on which

they lived. There may have been voyages thither from that greener isle ; and it would be a wonderful thing indeed, if bells calling to the worship of God, rang along the “ stern and rock-bound coast ” of Iceland, before the pagan Northmen reared their altars.

CHAPTER VI.

Pilgrim Nobles from Norway. — Harald's Price, Four Ounces of Silver. — No Indians to fight. — They have Conflicts. — A Republic made to Order. — Its Constitution. — The Althing. — The First Chief Magistrate.

BRAVE Norway Pilgrims! Pagans though they were, they had in their veins, like the founders of New England, the best blood of Europe. During the long summer days, had one been on those lava heights above the sea, he might have seen their old galleys creeping along the perilous coast, freighted with kindred and attendants, seeking the new land of the free.

And how does Harald feel about the increasing emigration of his most valuable subjects, following the fearless pioneer, Ingolf, from the hated shadow of his throne? At first, as all tyrants regard rebellious spirits, in the pride of power, he smiled at their rash adventure. But, when their number grew to thousands, it was another matter: their money and influence he could not well afford to lose. One day, through all the region of disaffection, went the royal decree, that every subject who left the kingdom for Iceland should pay the crown four ounces of silver; a heavy fine for those times, and not easy to raise. But freedom was more

precious than silver to the untamed Northmen. Unchecked, the living tide flowed on. All along the accessible borders of the volcanic land, they moored their vessels; the stern leaders of household bands, leaping into the foam, were followed by the family, and then the retainers, "armed to the teeth." The procession turned their faces towards the distant and frowning heights. By the wide fiords, they threaded roughest paths, which no feet had trodden before, seeking green pasturage, and fresh streams, beside which to build their lava cabins. These Icelandic exiles had their own curious ways of getting and holding possession of the unfenced slopes and valleys. One of these was, to light fires at the mouths of all the streams running into a fiord, and claiming the whole district through which they ran. Shooting a fiery arrow across a stream, was extending the right to the land from the spot where it fell upon the other side, to the terminus of the river. Then, again, estates were separated by the natural boundaries of mountains, and ridges of hills. These colonists found no Indians to oppose their progress, as did those of New England eight hundred years later. Had the fierce Northmen been saluted with the war-whoop, what fighting there would have been! For those chieftains and their warriors, as we have seen, have no rivals in the world's history: a passion for arms was the master one. They had no higher ambition than to die with their weapons of war in their hands, dripping with the blood of the slain.

When the district of a chieftain was determined,

he allotted to each of the freemen who followed him a portion of it, built a temple, or *hof*, and became, as he had been in Norway, a *godi*, and was so called after the deity he worshipped. The chieftain was both priest and leader. Men were compelled to pay a tax on the *hof*, and follow their lord on his journeys and expeditions. It must have been a splendid and imposing spectacle, when, with their burnished arms, these physically splendid warriors marched behind their chief, mounted on his richly caparisoned steed. All went on peacefully for a few years, till new-comers found the best lands occupied, and thought, very naturally, they ought to have a share of the extensive farms appropriated without anybody's permission. If the lord of the manor refused to divide, the question must be decided by "wager of battle," or trial of the case by arms. If the aggressor won the day, he quietly took the coveted portion; if he lost, and survived the combat, he retired from the field, and sought elsewhere a home.

Quarrels multiplied, and all classes were getting restless. The sensible, shrewd old Northmen saw something must be done to unite and protect the whole people. But where shall they find the model for a constitution, and a mind to frame it for the conflicting elements? A council was called, and all eyes turned to Ulfjot, a man distinguished for learning and justice. But, like the truly great of every age, he shrank from a responsibility demanding the rarest powers. One summer day this thoughtful Icelander stole away from his quiet home, to the harbor, and sailed for Norway. He

sought Thorlief the Wise. Under him, for three years, he studied national laws and customs, and talked freely with the most enlightened minds.

This Jefferson of the tenth century returned to Iceland, and the people assembled to hear his plan for a distinct nationality. How well he knew the spirit of his countrymen ! The clashing of sword and shield, ringing out upon the clear air, proclaimed the adoption of a republican form of government ; a miracle in the world of politics, and on a continent of kings and lawless tribes. And thus a republic was made to order, on the farthest land known in the cold north, with the smiling realms of Europe at their feet, carved up by monarchs, great and small.

There remained, unavoidably, the aristocracy of the old chiefs and nobles, with other defects ; which, considering its antiquity, were no more than spots upon the face of the rising sun.

The glory of that republic is reflected to-day from English law and liberty, and re-appears in the freer institutions of America.

In the new order of things, the island had four divisions, corresponding to the points of compass, and named after them. Each of these was subdivided into three districts ; and these, again, into three more, called godords. There were governors over the provinces ; under them were prefects, or magistrates ; and five officers were appointed to maintain peace and good order in each of the smaller districts, and especially to care for the poor.

The needy must be cared for by kindred, if able to do it ; and, if not, by the parish.

In all these divisions were held assemblies for public purposes. In the third, or the smaller districts, they were composed of all the citizens who held real estate to a given amount, and were of an "unblemished moral character."

The district assembly was called a *Thing*, that is, *to say*, presided over by the goda, selected for their wisdom, and love of justice. Near the *Thingstead*, or place of meeting, was Odin's temple. The judges sat within the *dom-ringh*, or doom-ring, formed of upright stones or hazel-twigs. In its centre was the *blotsteinn*, or stone of execution; a huge block of basalt, with a ridge across it, upon which were broken the backs of certain criminals.

The *Althing*, or general assembly, was the great annual court of the nation, held at Thingvalla.

Ulfjot was chosen unanimously the first chief magistrate, who held his office three years. The "pen, mightier than the sword," won the honor unsought by himself or political partisans.

"After the year 999, the *Althing* was opened on the Thursday between the 28th of June and 4th July, and remained in session fourteen days. Since agriculture could not be carried on in Iceland, and the raising of cattle required little labor, the men early acquired the habit of travelling to Thingvalla every year; so that finally many thousands of persons assembled in the valley, exchanged information, traded, feasted, and thus established a kind of national fair. The civil and criminal cases were practically tried before the whole people; and whatever law was decreed went immediately into action.

“ After Iceland fell to Norway, and then to Denmark, the form of holding the *Althing* was still observed, although it was scarcely more than an empty form. The meetings were held in the open air, as in the old and glorious ages, until the year 1690; when a wall of blocks of lava was erected, and a canvas roof spanned over it to protect the delegates from inclement weather. Here Danish law was proclaimed to the people, up to the year 1800, when the seat of justice was removed to Reykjavik. Even the old wall has been taken away; and the Hill of the Law is now as bare and grand as when it witnessed the deliberations of a free people.”

There is one short word, of pure Icelandic origin, which is a Drummond light in its significance, pouring a flood of radiance from that lone island, and the far past, wherever human rights are, or shall be protected. It is *KVIDR*; a *verdict*, or *trial by jury*. The neighbors of the man arraigned, whose number might be four, six, or ten, accompanied him to the court, and there took the oath of impartial judgment. The *tōltar-kvidir* was the verdict of *twelve*, or special jury; called also *gōda-kvidir*, or *priest-verdict*, because the *gōdi* of the district summoned the jury, and was *ex officio* its foreman. This guardian of the rights of freemen was transplanted to English ground; for the settlers of England were kith and kin to those of Iceland. This old Scandinavian institution gradually died out in the mother countries, and came to an end in Iceland A.D. 1271-1281, with the fall of the commonwealth; whereas it was naturalized in England, which became the classical land of trial by jury.

CHAPTER VII.

The Magnificent Capitol. — Built when the Island was made. — The National Court. — Tents and Booths. — The Incendiary. — His Escape.

FALLING into the procession from Reykjavik, and other towns, the most of which are single farms, we are on the way to Thingvalla, over a narrow pathway, and through varied, but always wild scenery. Here and there, for a few miles, a farm-house is nestled in a green valley.

Now we cross a broad lava-bed, which gleams in the sun's rays like a vast iron plain, torn and seamed by the convulsions which made it. Beyond it an ocean of peaks spreads away to the horizon. "There is a magical effect to the atmosphere, seen in no other country. The air is so pure, the strong contrasts of black, brown, and red lavas, and the green fields, and snowy mountains, make splendid pictures, even at twenty miles' distance." Farther on, we enter the valley of the Laxá, or Salmon River, rushing madly to the sea.

Fording the stream, our narrow way leads through utter desolation to a broad plateau of barren rock. Suddenly we halt on the brow of a precipice; and what a panorama bursts on the view! It is the vale of Thingvalla. No pen or pencil can sketch its wonders.

We are on the edge of the Almanne-Gja, or All-Men's Chasm. Half a dozen miles across the valley, is the Hrafna Gja, or Raven's Chasm, the corresponding wall ; their very angles revealing the rent where they were driven asunder. Between these pinnacled barriers, lie fifty square miles of once molten lava, which sank a hundred feet below the land-level along these gigantic ramparts.

The first glance from the plain to the ragged walls, converging in the distance, is bewildering by the magnitude and grandeur of the scene. Great shadows fall at their base, in the changing light that brightens the gloomy battlements.

Towards the south, the plain slopes gradually to the crystal "Thingvalla Vatn," or Thingvalla Water, whose clear expanse is ten miles long, half as many wide, and in some places over a thousand feet deep.

Through a gorge in the Hrafna Gja, a river comes tumbling and foaming, as if crazy with delight over its escape, and glides away into its placid bosom. Beneath its translucent waters, as everywhere in Iceland, are seams and chasms,—the savage scars of that great battle of elements, in which the victorious land was enthroned in grim majesty amid the sea. Two pretty islands, Sandey and Vesey, dot its bosom. The only human life there is in the little parsonage.

The train moves forward to nearly the middle of the beautiful valley. On the checkered floor open chasms similar, but broader and deeper, to those which surround and guard ancient castles. Straight down, they go sometimes far below a sounding-line.

Three of these form a triangle, enclosing a stony floor, with only a narrow causeway connecting it with the surrounding valley. This is the Capitol of the republic, in which the Althing annually sits.

At the upper extremity, is an elevation of rock, crowning the Loeberg, or Mount of Laws. Upon this is the seat of the chief magistrate.

A simple illustration will convey a sufficiently clear idea of the spot. With three gashed and ragged blocks, make an acute triangle. Into this, drop another, wedge-shaped, the point touching the apex of the triangular wall around it. That central block is the place where sits the national court ; the spaces between it and the enclosing blocks are the chasms ; and the point of contact, the narrow and natural bridge leading to it. Standing at the base, and looking up the valley beyond it, on the right nearly a quarter of a mile distant, the river dashes over the Almanne-Gja ; and beyond it are the secluded church and lava-turf parsonage. Farther away, spreads the lake, with the far-off horizon of magnificent mountains.

One of the contorted columns in the north-west side is “Hanging Rock,” to which certain culprits (tradition says) were tied by a rope around the neck, and then hurled into the frightful abyss.

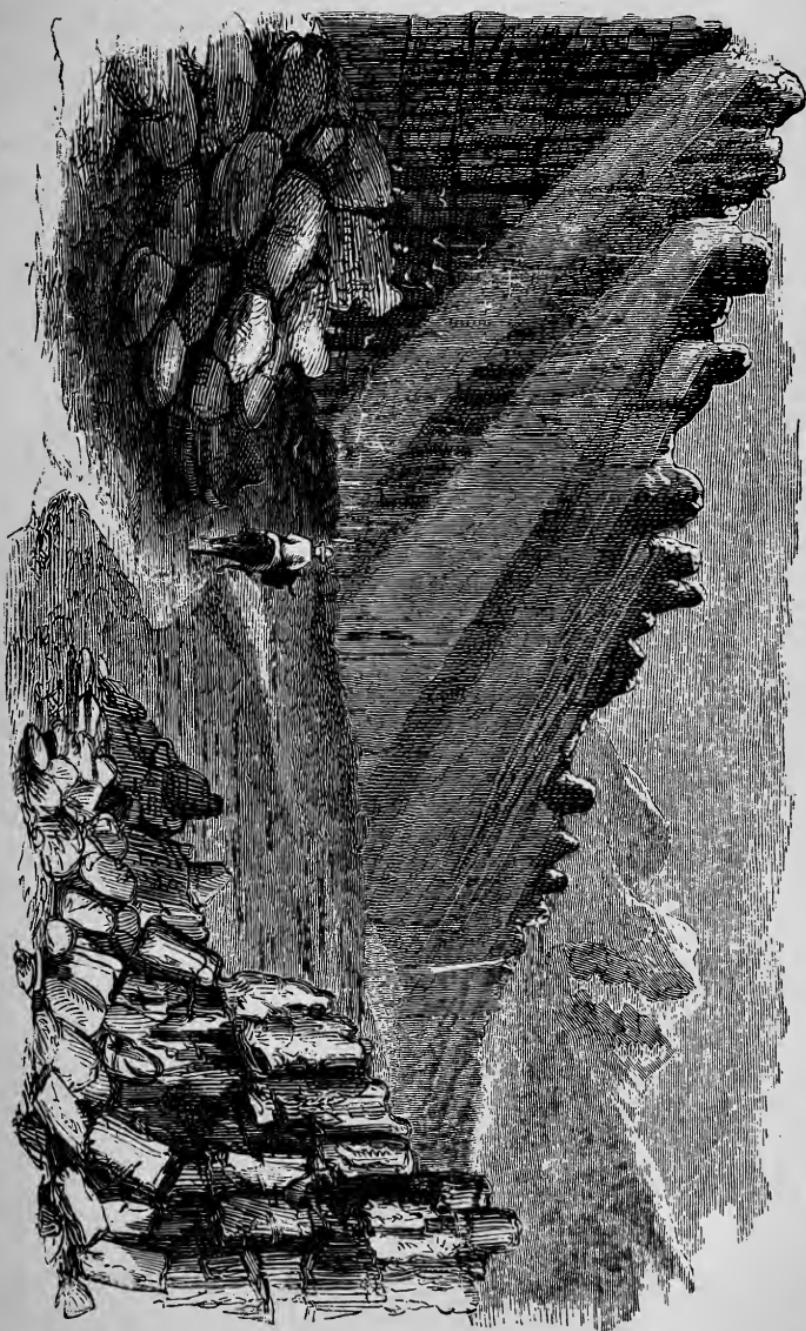
Below the second fall of the river, “where it tears through the south-east wall,” is a pool of blue foaming water, used for the execution of women convicted of child-murder or witchcraft.

Of the island in the Axará, where duels were fought, a patch of mud only remains. To the south,

rise picturesque mountains, on whose slopes four hot springs send up their incense of vapor, adding to the strange solemnity of the scene. The majestic walls are not equally high and perpendicular, the falling fragments of the Almanne-Gja having filled the angles on the plain below.

It is August of the year 950. The judges and dooms-men take the three rows of stone benches on each side, just below it. A single policeman strides over the area to keep order. Outside of this open court, be-yond the chasms, are pitched the tents, and gather groups of the people who throng the broad galleries of this Capitol of their national Congress. Gay attire and polished weapons flash in the sunlight of the long summer day.

An incendiary is summoned to trial. The evi-dence is clear ; and the Lögsögumadr, or promulgator of the law, from the Lögberg, asks the dooms-men, "Guilty, or not guilty ?" The clashing of sword and shield seals his fate. With a sudden bound, Fosi breaks away from the fatal ring, and flies to the narrowest part of the encircling gorge. The abyss yawns twenty feet between him and the ascending slope on the opposite side. But dear life is at stake ; and, like a hunted deer, he scales the chasm, and disappears among the dismal solitudes, beyond the reach of his pursuers.





CHAPTER VIII.

Embarking for Reykjavik. — Copenhagen. — Rocky Isles. — The Needles and Arch of Portland Head. — Westman Islands. — Columbus visited them. — Bird Lamps. — First Glimpses. — Impressive Scenes.

“DEAR, dear ! and you are going to Iceland ! a long way from America. I would like to visit your country ; but it is very dangerous to travel by sea. A vessel was burned up not long since, and many of my friends were lost. It was a dreadful affair.”

So chatted Hans Christian Andersen, in his out-of-the-way chambers, by one of the bustling canals of Copenhagen, to the first “Yankee” whose pencil gave us, from his own portfolio, graphic pictures of the most wonderful scenery and country in the world.

Young people everywhere know Hans Christian Andersen as their friend ; the gifted Danish author, who has been the delight not only of children, but read by all ages. He moves about the ancient city of his birth from one neighborhood of the poor classes to another, to study the quaint characters which re-appear in his sprightly pages.

We bid him good-by, and “The Arcturus” steams away from the capital of Denmark towards the capital of Iceland.

“ The most wonderful land in the world.” Yes ; although scarcely known in this country, beyond its name, till the visit of our famous delegation to the Millennial Jubilee of 1874, we shall find it so. It is wonderful in its origin and scenery, in its fascinating old traditions, and real history. Nor did the pulse of the youthful reader ever quicken more wildly over a tale of fiction, than it will over some of the earliest written adventures in Europe, by descendants of the daring vikings. By the many who have thought of Iceland as I have done nearly all my life, the people, and their sea-girdled home, have been sadly libelled in the chambers of imagery. A few huts among snow-banks most of the year, their occupants resembling the fur-clad Esquimaux, was the outlined view of both, whenever any mention of the far-off, desolate spot brought them to mind.

From Copenhagen, the voyage is through the Skager Rack towards the north of Scotland, from whose ports Englishmen sail for Iceland. Upon leaving the glorious land of Bruce (once itself a powerful realm), swarms of rocky isles attract the eye. The Shetlands, Hebrides, Orkneys, and many more, dot the expanse of waters breaking against those northern walls of the British Empire. Farther on, about half way to Iceland, are the Faroe Isles. Only a few of all these are inhabited. The people are shepherds, tending their flocks in the lonely valleys, fishermen, rocking in their light boats through storm and sunshine, and egg-hunters, hanging by cords from lofty cliffs, to rob the numberless wild birds of their eggs.

Occasionally, by the sea, a village bursts on the sight ; rows of low houses, with turf or tarred roofs, separated by narrow, dirty streets, with a chapel, and sometimes a public-library building.

The people are a mixed race, in which the emigration many centuries ago from Scandinavia is largely represented.

A vessel from Copenhagen, through the Skager Rack and Cattegat, will be likely to approach the coast of Iceland farther on the southerly side than by the other route, feeling its way along through fogs and storms, near Portland Head, about seventy miles from the capital, on the western side of the island. Needle-shaped columns of rock stand in gigantic spires of lava, entirely separated from each other. A little farther on, is a circular opening through a promontory of the same dark rock, two hundred feet by ninety, drilled by the perpetual dash of the waves through the projecting wall, and extending below the water. A vessel can march through this triumphal arch of the sea. Then, again, a cataract plunges down fifty feet, without a break, into the ocean, whose waves, chafed to a foam against the solid barrier, receive the bounding torrent. Looking away towards the interior, a greater wonder meets the vision. A cascade falls eight hundred feet down the bare summit, shining like a silver streamer on the walls of lava. It is the largest and most wonderful *barometer* in the world. For, when the secluded dwellers on the Westman Islands see the broad white ribbon tossed into mist by the wind, they know it is useless to attempt to reach with their

frail boats the shores of Iceland, over the reefs, and through the angry billows.

Those Westman Islands are a group of fifteen piles of black lava, seven miles from the southern coast of Iceland ; only one of which, Heimaey, or Home Isle, three miles long, is inhabited. There is a time-worn church near the harbor, which was sacked, and robbed of its silver and vestments, by pirates, two centuries ago. Near it are a pastor, a doctor, and a magistrate. Sheep are lifted to the green spots on the gloomy heights by ropes, and, when the storm rages, are folded in caverns, to save them from being swept into the sea. Life here is indeed wild and lonely. Only occasionally, during the short summer-time, can the people get even to Iceland. The fulmar petrel, a curious bird of very strange odor, with its eggs, which are gathered by hanging from the rocks, suspended by small cords, such as were used hundreds of years ago, are the principal articles of food. Offer the daring egg-hunter a strong rope, instead of this frail cord of hair, and he will reject it, almost with indignation, because his ancestors for several hundred years used simply the line. Not unfrequently, a bold, strong man loses his hold, or a sharp edge cuts his cord, and away he goes, like a falling fragment of lava, down, a thousand feet below, either into the sea, or is dashed upon the rocks.

And how do these imprisoned islanders light their huts ? You could not guess in a lifetime. They take young petrels, and, running wicks down their throats, turn these balls of oil into lamps, the small flames tipping their bills. The tails resemble *han-*

dles, but the natives carry the plump bodies in their palms.

Infants cannot live on this savage spot, and are sent to the mainland during their early childhood. The air and food for them and their mothers are such, that, during the first seven days after birth, they are seized with a strange malady, attended with spasms, and nearly always die.

It would do any kind heart good, when some ship is approaching, to see these poor people rush to the shore, with a heart-hunger intense as the wolf's appetite for prey, and watch and wait for letters from far-off kindred, or Danish newspapers, to learn from them the events of the great outside world, from which no tidings have come for many a monotonous month.

Shipwrecks, tragedies of the most sanguinary kind, pillage by outlaws, and, through all these, the unceasing roar of the boiling deep, and the fearful music of storms sweeping over the barren heights, make an outline of the history of the Westman Isles.

Fame's laurels, like every thing earthly, are surely a very uncertain possession ; and an unexpected frost may at any time nip some of their leaves. It seems quite evident that Columbus visited these islands in 1477, and also the mainland ; it may be, gathering valuable hints concerning the direction from Europe, of the distant continent, which the bold pioneer Northmen had discovered before him. The shrewd navigator kept his own secrets, if he had any of value to him, and used them in securing for himself

a deserved place on the world's scroll of immortal names.

Eight miles west of Cape Reykjanes, there is a circular column of rock, called the "Meal-sack," rising two hundred feet above the sea. It leans a little like the tower at Pisa, Italy, and is more than four hundred feet in circumference. Its top is covered and fringed with guano, giving it the appearance of a bag of gigantic size, filled to overflow with meal.

It has never been scaled by any other feet than those of the myriad birds which circle around it, and make it their grand dormitory at night; a monumental column of some great volcanic upheaval in the ages past.

Whether we embark from Scotland or from Denmark, after sailing five hundred miles, and within nearly one hundred and sixty of Greenland, as you approach the coast of Iceland, upon the horizon glitter in the wonderfully transparent air, if clear, the jokuls, or snow-covered mountains, of the unexplored heart of Iceland. These are the majestic sentinels, which look down upon the surrounding and varied landscape, sloping to the sea. Around the shining summits, bright, even in the long arctic night, with auroral splendors, and the flashing stars of the clear heavens, rise the fells, or dark lava mountains, without crowns of perpetual snow. On their sides are spread broad table-lands, dropping off into unfathomed gulfs, and long ravines, whose gloom the sun's rays never enter beyond the black crags which border them. In their perpetual night, the frost-king reigns undisturbed as among the glaciers of the Alps.

Nearer the sea, you behold piles of solid rock; then slopes of loose stone, as if some of those grim heaps had been torn up and pounded by giants in their pastime. Below these, are terraces of the same dark basalt, in whose shadow madly dash the widening rivers towards the sea, and lie the peaceful valleys. From this largest part of the island, in which there is no human life, wind away the many *fiords*, or inlets, at whose mouths beetling promontories guard the only entrance within the borders of this desolate land. The shores are fringed with little islands of the same lava rock, over which the incoming tides and waves break into foam, encircling the island with a white and beautiful wreath, from the protecting deep.

North-east of Iceland, and nearly east of Greenland, there is Jan Mayen, a very wonderful island, seldom seen by man. It rises nearly eight thousand feet from the sea, with scarcely margin enough for landing. It is covered with glaciers, the terraces and pinnacles making it look as if a Niagara, while pouring its flood over the majestic mountain, dashing downwards on every side of it in a deluge of eddying floods and cascades, had in a moment been congealed into shining crystal. Lord Dufferin, now governor-general of Canada, visited it in his yacht in 1856, and speaks of it as grand beyond the power of language to describe.

An American traveller pleasantly tells us how Icelandic scenery impressed him upon his first ride into its solitudes:—

“ The weird, fire-blasted, and flood-scorched wil-

derness on all sides was as silent as death, save when we approached some dark lagoon, and startled up the flocks of water-fowl that dwelt in its sedgy borders. Then the air was pierced with wild screams, and strange cries, and the rocks resounded to the flapping of many wings. To me there was a peculiar charm in all this. It was different from any thing I had recently experienced. The roughness of the trail, the absence of cultivated fields, the entire exemption from the restraints of civilization, were perfectly delightful after a dreary residence of nearly a year in Germany. Here, at least, there were no passport bureaus, no meddlesome police, no conceited and disagreeable *habitués* of public places with fierce dogs running at their heels, no *Verbotener Wege* staring one in the face at every turn. Here all ways possible to be travelled were open to the public ; here was plenty of fresh air, and no lack of elbow-room ; here an unsophisticated American could travel without being persecuted every ten minutes by applications from distinguished officers in livery for six kreutzers.

“ It seemed very strange to be travelling in Iceland, actually plodding my way over deserts of lava, and breathing blasts of air fresh from the summit of Mount Hecla. I was at last in the land of the Sagas ; the land of fire and brimstone, and boiling fountains ; the land which, as a child, I had been accustomed to look upon as the *Ultima Thule*, where men and fish and fire and water were pitted against each other in everlasting strife. How often had the fascinating vision of Icelandic travel crossed my

mind! and how often had I dismissed it with a sigh, as too much happiness to hope for in this world! And now it was all realized. Was I any the happier? Was it what I expected? Well, we won't probe these questions too far. It was a very strange reality, at all events."

CHAPTER IX.

Icelanders discover Greenland and America. — The Wonderful History. — Mysterious Disappearance. — The first Yankee born in America, nearly Nine Hundred Years Ago. — Thorfinn returns to Iceland. — Death. — The Widow a Pilgrim and Recluse.

IT is not upon the island only, that the Northmen of Iceland had achieved wonders as a nation: they led a continent, if not the world, in discoveries. For a hundred years they had roamed the surrounding seas, when there came to its shores, one day, a stately chieftain from Norway. He was accompanied by his son, without attendants, and with the stern, sad air of an unwilling exile. And so he was. He had smitten down an enemy with his blade, in Norway, and was banished from the realm. Father and son lived undisturbed, alone in their solitude, for three years. Meanwhile the young man, whose name was Eirek, had a quarrel with a native of the island, and slew him. He, in turn, was sentenced to banishment. Whither shall he fly? Not to Norway, with the guilt of both himself and Thorwald known to his countrymen. He turns the prow of his galley towards islands somewhere to the north-west, of which an old rover had brought tidings.

Heroic young man, launching out on unknown seas, to find a hermit home! “Land! land!”

breaks from the lips of the fugitive, after several days of wandering. He drops anchor by a small island, and, securing his bark, builds his winter-hut. Spring at length thaws out the imprisoned Eirek ; and his sails are unfurled for a larger stretch of land, outlined on the distant horizon. After exploring verdant valleys with crystal streams, it was called Graenland, or Greenland ; he shrewdly saying to himself, that a good name will attract people thither.

When his three years of exile were ended, Eirek returned to Iceland. A year later a group of galleys left its coast for Greenland.

Ten years afterwards his son Lief visited Norway, was induced by the king to embrace Christianity, and, in spite of opposition from his father, introduced it into his adopted country.

Across the ocean from Norway to Greenland, continued to come the laden ships, till in the twelfth century, in that now so desolate region, there were one hundred and ninety farms, a cathedral, eleven churches, and two monasteries. The climate was then comparatively mild.

With the dawn of the fifteenth century, the colony mysteriously disappeared ; and no further records of it remain. Whether the population perished with cold and famine, from a blockade of icebergs, or were swept off by the "black death," a terrible epidemic that prevailed in portions of Northern Europe, none can tell us. Mysterious silence will hang over that grave of a once prosperous people, till the final resurrection of earth's buried humanity.

Four hundred years afterwards Danish missiona-

ries found ruins of churches, walls, and tombstones. Upon one of the memorials of the dead, had survived a very touching and beautiful epitaph in Runic characters:—

“ VIGDIS M. D. HVILER ; GLEDE, GUD, SAL HENNA.”

Vigdis rests here: God gladden her soul!

What more beautiful? a flower of human love, adorning the burial-place of a nation, like a fragrant blossom in the silence and gloom of an Alpine glen, or on the walls of some old catacomb.

But, out of this banishment to Greenland, came a discovery of far greater interest to us Americans. Among the colonists led by Eirek to its slopes, was one Hurjulf, an Icelander, whose son Bjarni at the time was off the coast of Norway on a trading expedition. He had heard nothing of the desertion of the old homestead. How could he? No mails crossed those northern seas; and, if years passed without tidings from the absent and loved, it was no more to them than the delay of the post for a day is to us who live by telegraph and steam.

So Bjarni, who had no idea of being left behind, steered his vessel in the direction he guessed the family had sailed. His men stood by him, more faithful than the crew of Columbus, four hundred years afterwards. Many days he tossed about, going he knew not whither. At last a strange land appeared in the distance. Coasting along by it, and repelled by its forbidding aspect, he sailed away. Upon his return, the tale of his adventures was discussed during the long winter evenings, in the dwelling of the now

venerable Eirek, until his son, Lief Erikson, encouraged by his father's enthusiasm, determined to seek the far land. Buying Bjarni's ship, it was fitted out for a long voyage, and its sails were spread for the mysterious shores. After keeping the course Bjarni indicated for several days, he discerned the very spot his predecessor had seen, which was doubtless Newfoundland. The name given to it, on account of the surface of large flat stones it presented upon approaching it, was Helluland, or Flat-Stone Land. Pushing on westward, another coast rose upon the unknown waste of waters, which he called Markland, or Woodland, from its abundance of forest-trees. This was doubtless Nova Scotia. Onward still, the bold navigator kept his westward course.

A river, which connected a lake with the sea, invited him to drop anchor from its safety and pleasant banks. A German, named Tyker, who belonged to the crew, came in one day from the country, to which he had strayed, wild with delight. He had found and feasted upon grapes! Lief, at first incredulous, was equally glad to find it true: the country was named Vinland, or Vineland. This region historians believe, beyond a doubt, to have been the coast of Massachusetts. Lief's brother Thorwald, upon hearing the report of the returning explorers, set sail, and went up Buzzard's Bay, touching at Martha's Vineyard, and Mount Hope; and it is quite probable that Taunton River is the one up which his galley ploughed its way. He was afterwards slain by the natives.

The possible truth of the following statement of

Prof. Anderson adds interest to the fate of the slain adventurer. "In the year 1831 there was found in the vicinity of Fall River, Mass., *a skeleton in armor*; and many of the circumstances connected with it are so wonderful that it might indeed seem almost as though it were the skeleton of Thorwald Erikson. This skeleton in armor, which attracted much attention at the time, was the subject of much learned discussion; and our celebrated poet Longfellow wrote, in the year 1841, a poem about it, beginning,—

" Speak, speak! thou fearful guest!"

" After which, he makes the skeleton tell about his adventures as a viking, about the pine forests of Norway, about his voyage across the stormy deep, and about the discovery of America; concerning which he says,—

" Three weeks we westward bore ;
And, when the storm was o'er,
Cloudlike we saw the shore
Stretching to leeward ;
There for my lady's bower
Built I the lofty tower,*
Which to this very hour
Stands looking seaward."

These are the last two verses of the poem:—

" Still grew my bosom then,
Still as a stagnant fen;
Hateful to me were men,

* The tower here referred to is the famous Newport tower in Rhode Island, which undoubtedly was built by the Norsemen.

The sunlight hateful!
In the vast forest here,
Clad in my warlike gear,
Fell I upon my spear:
Oh, death was grateful!

“ Thus seamed with many scars,
Bursting these prison-bars,
Up to its native stars
My soul ascended.
There from the flowing bowl
Deep drinks the warrior’s soul :
Skaal! to the Northland, skaal!
Thus the tale ended.”

“ The great Swedish chemist Berzelius analyzed a part of the breastplate which was found on the skeleton, and found that in composition it corresponded with metals used in the north during the tenth century ; and, comparing the Fall-River breastplate with old northern armors, it was also found to correspond with these in style.”

In 1006 Thorfinn visited Vinland, in a vessel ; and his significant name was Karlsefni ; that is, “ possessing manly abilities.” And now we have the first native American of European blood.

Gudrid, the beautiful wife of Thorfinn, who was with him, gave birth to a son at Straumfjord, or Stream-Firth ; in other words, River Inlet. This is believed to be Buzzard’s Bay ; and Strawnly, or *Stream Isle* (because the tide flowed so rapidly by it), “ either Martha’s Vineyard, or the island of Cuttyhunk and Nashawna, which then were probably connected.”

The boy was named Snorri ; his whole name being Snorri Thorfinnson, or, the son of Thorfinn. He founded one of the most distinguished families in Iceland.

Americans in Iceland for more than eight hundred years ! Where in history is Columbus ? Where are the old Virginia cavaliers ? and where the Pilgrim Fathers ? Who knows but that, centuries before the sea-rovers ran “against our rock-bound coast,” some more ancient wanderer upon the sea ate grapes on our soil, but left no record behind ?

In Thorfinn’s colony were 158 persons. Seven of them, including Gudrid his wife, were women. Three years Thorfinn passed in Vinland, receiving visits from the Indians, who had not seen any kind of edged tools before. One seized an axe, and ran away with it to the encampment of his tribe. Another took it, and, as an experiment, sunk it into the brain of a companion. The result so terrified them all, that a chief, after a careful examination of the wonderful instrument, threw it into the sea. The sea-roving Thorfinn returned to Iceland, and resumed his cherished “life upon the ocean-wave.” Age and a fortune induced him at length to retire ; and, building a large mansion, he became a revered patriarch, whose halls rang with festive hospitality, rivalling the wealthy chiefs of Norway in the rich entertainments and style of his establishment.

He died lamented, and was honored with a magnificent funeral. His widow made a pilgrimage to Rome with Snorri, and then retired to a convent near a church which her princely husband had erected.

Prof. Rafn, and other learned antiquarians, think the evidence sufficient, that the DIGHTON WRITING ROCK, on the banks of Taunton River, Bristol Co., Mass., is a Norse memorial of Thorfinn's expedition ; and the translation is rendered as follows: "Thorfinn, with one hundred and fifty-one Norse seafaring men, took possession of this land (landnam)."

Great men sometimes wait long, or, rather, their *graves* do, for the recognition of their greatness. The dream did not haunt the wildest fancy of the Northmen, just eight hundred and seventy-four years ago, that now two nations would be interested in the erection of a fitting monument to the memory of him to whom belongs the honor of the pre-Columbian discovery of America, Lief Erikson, the remote ancestor of the man whose monitor well-nigh saved this Republic. At the head of the movement is Ole Bull, president of a society organized for the purpose.

The famous Norwegian poet, Björnstjerne Björnson, is to write the cantata for the dedication of the memorial shaft, and Griegg is to compose the music.

Col. T. W. Higginson, in his standard "Young Folks' United States," now in press, maintains, on the contrary, that Gov. Benedict Arnold's will, made in 1677, refers to the Newport relic when he writes, "my stone-built windmill," which resembled structures for the same purpose in England. He also insists that the Norsemen did not wear brass armor, while old Indian warriors did have breastplates made from kettles of that metal ; while the inscriptions on Dighton Rock had the same aboriginal origin.

CHAPTER X.

The Sea-Rovers' Ships. — **An Illustrious Emigrant.** — **Interesting Ceremonies.** — **Tunnlaug and the Poet Rafn.** — **A True Love-Story of the Early Period.** — **The Beautiful Helga.** — **An Ancient Poet-Laureate.** — **He wins the Hand of Helga.** — **A Gloomy Festival.** — **A Duel.** — **A Traitor.** — **The Sad Ending of a Domestic Tragedy in High Life.**

A NORTHMAN'S ship is among the relics in the University of Norway, and a good specimen of ancient naval architecture.

One of the Sagas gives us an account of Olaf Tryggvason's galley: "That part of the keel which rested on the ground was a hundred and forty feet long. None but the choicest material was used in its construction. It contained thirty-four rowing-benches, and its stem and stern were overlaid with gold. Their vessels would compare favorably with those of other nations, which have been used in later times in expeditions around the world, and were in every way adapted for an ocean-voyage. They certainly were as well fitted to cross the Atlantic as were the ships of Columbus.

" This ship of Olaf Tryggvason was called the Long Serpent, and was built by the ship-carpenter Thorberg, who is celebrated in the annals of the north for his ship-building. The Earl Hakon had a dragon containing forty rowing-benches ; King Canute had

one containing sixty; and King Olaf, the saint, possessed two ships capable of carrying two hundred men each. The Norse dragons glided on the waters as gracefully as ducks or swans, of which they also had the form."

A graphic description of the emigration of a colony about this time, as it is told in the Sagas, will possess the value of detail and genuine narrative. The chieftain Rolf, or Thorolf, resided in the northern parts of Norway, and, like all other petty kings and chiefs of the country, was the pontiff of religion, as well as the patriarchal head of his clan. Rolf presided in the great temple of Thor, the peculiar national deity of Norway, in the island of Moster; and wore a long beard, from which he was called Thorolf-Moster-skegg (Thorolf the bearded of Moster.) Thorolf had incurred the resentment of King Harald Hårfager, by giving an asylum to Björn, one of Thorolf's relations, who was persecuted by that monarch. Harald held an assize, or *Thing*, and proclaimed Thorolf an outlaw, unless he surrendered himself, with Björn, into the king's hands, within a limited period. Thorolf offered a great sacrifice to his tutelary deity, and consulted the oracle of Thor, whether he should surrender himself to the king, or migrate to Iceland, which had been settled by Ingolf ten years before.

The response of the oracle determined him to seek an asylum in this remote and sequestered island. He set sail, carrying with him the earth upon which the throne of Thor had been placed, the image of the god, and the greater part of the wooden work

of his temple. He took also his goods, his slaves, and his family. Many friends followed him.

When the vessel approached the south-western coast of Iceland, and entered the Faxa-Fiord, the adventurer cast into the sea the columns of the sanctuary, on which the image of the god was carved; intending to land wherever they should be carried by the winds and waves. He followed them to the northward, round the promontory of Snaefellsness, and entered the bay on the other side; to which, from its extreme breadth, he gave the name of Breida-Fjord or Broad-Ford.

Here Thorolf landed, and took formal possession of that part of the coast in the ancient accustomed manner, by walking, with a burning firebrand in his hand, round the lands he intended to occupy, and marking the boundaries by setting fire to the grass. He then built a large dwelling-house on the shores of what was afterwards called the Hofs-vog, or Temple Bay, and erected a spacious temple to Thor, having an entrance-door on each side; and towards the inner end were erected the sacred columns of the former temple, in which the *regin-naglar*, or nails of the divinity, were fastened.

Within these columns was a sanctuary, on which is placed a silver ring, two ounces in weight, which was used in the ministration of every solemn oath, and adorned the person of the pontiff-chieftain in every public assembly of the people. The basin for receiving the blood of the sacrifice was placed by the side of the altar, with the instrument of sprinkling; and around it stood, in separate niches, the images of

the other deities worshipped by the people of the north.

The assize, or *Herjar-thing*, of the infant community, was held in the open air near this temple ; and the oaths of the jurors and witnesses were sanctioned, amidst the blood of sacrifice, by a solemn appeal to the national deities : “ So help me, Freyr, Njord, and the almighty As ! ”* [that is, Odin]. The site of the temple, and the place of the popular assembly, were both considered as consecrated ground, not to be defiled with blood, nor polluted with any of the baser necessities of nature. A tribute was established and collected by Thorolf from all the members of his little community, to defray the expenses of the temple and the worship there maintained.

There is a fine romance in the Gunnlaug Saga, which flings a soft, clear light upon the love-affairs of the Icelandic Scandinavians. The best of it is, that there is no doubt about its reality.

Thorstein and Illugi, both men of wealth and power, dwelt in the great vale of the Boorgar-Fiord, in the western part of Iceland. The former, who was son to the celebrated poet Egill, had a daughter named Helga, the pride of her family, and the loveliest among the women of the island. In the house of Illugi, the most remarkable person was his youngest son, Gunnlang. Born in 988, he early acquired reputation from his stature, strength, and prowess,

* *As*, God; plural, *Aesir*, the Gods; here limited to the chief deity by the epithet *almighty*.

both of body and mind. But his temper was turbulent and unyielding ; and, being opposed by his father in his desire to travel, he abruptly left his home when only fifteen years of age, and took refuge in the house of Thorstein, by whom he was hospitably received.

Here, while his mind was instructed by the father, his heart was subdued by the gentleness and elegance of the daughter. Living with Helga, and partaking in all her occupations and amusements, a mutual affection was quickly formed ; and the restless impetuosity of the boy passed into the refinement and delicacy of the youthful lover. His character thus changed, Gunnlaug was reconciled to his father, and, during three years, resided sometimes with him, sometimes at the house of Thorstein.

When he had reached the age of eighteen, Illugi consented to his going abroad ; but he would not leave Iceland till he had obtained from the father of his secretly betrothed Helga a solemn promise that the maiden's hand should be given to him, if, after three years had expired, he returned to claim it.

Departing from his native country, Gunnlaug visited the courts of England, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden, and was everywhere received with the honors to which his person and talents entitled him. His extempore poetry was admired, and munificently rewarded. This art he had early cultivated ; though with so much tendency to satire, that he was called *Ormstunga*, or the snake-tongue. At the court of the Swedish King Olavf, he found the celebrated poet Rafn, likewise an Icelander, and of noble birth.

A friendship formed between them was speedily broken by a dispute, which took place in the royal palace, respecting the comparative merits of their poetry. Rafn, thinking himself disgraced, declares his determination of revenge, and, in pursuance of this, returns to Iceland, where he seeks to obtain in marriage the maiden betrothed to his rival.

The three years being gone by, and no tidings received of Gunnlaug, Thorstein, after some delay, gave to Rafn the unwilling hand of Helga, whose heart, meanwhile, remained with her former lover. The unfortunate Gunnlaug, hastening home to claim his bride, was accidentally detained by a hurt received in wrestling, and reached the abode of his father on the very day on which Helga became a wife. A nuptial feast was prepared with all the splendor suited to the condition of the families concerned. Gunnlaug showed himself on a sudden among the assembled guests, eminent above all from the beauty of his person and the richness of his apparel. The eyes of the lovers hung upon each other in mute and melancholy sorrow: and the bitterest pangs went to the heart of the gentle Helga. The nuptial feast was gloomy and without joy. A contest between the rivals was prevented by the interference of their friends; but they parted with increased animosity and hatred.

The revenge of Rafn, though thus accomplished, gave him little satisfaction. Helga, refusing all conjugal endearments, spent her days in unceasing sadness. At the great public assembly at Thingvalla, the ensuing summer, Gunnlaug challenged his rival

to a single combat; and, the challenge being accepted, they met on an island in the river which flows into the Lake of Thingvalla. The combat, however, though severe, was indecisive; and a renewal of it was prevented by an edict of the assembly, passed the following day, prohibiting the practice of duels in Iceland.

Gunnlaug here sees his beloved Helga for the last time, and in the impassioned language of poetry laments their mutual affliction and sorrows. Restrained from deciding their quarrel in Iceland, and each pursued by his own unhappiness and resentment, the rivals pass over to the territory of Sweden, and meet, attended by their respective companions, at a place called Dynguines. A combat takes place; the companions of each party fall victims to the bloody fray; and Gunnlaug and Rafn are left alone to decide the contest. The foot of the latter is severed by the sword of Gunnlaug, who wishes now to discontinue the combat; but Rafn exclaims that he would persevere in it, could he procure some water to alleviate his thirst.

The generous Gunnlaug, trusting to the honor of his adversary, brings him water in his helmet from an adjoining lake. Rafn, seizing the critical moment when the water was presented to him, strikes with his sword the bare head of Gunnlaug; crying out, at the same time, that he cannot endure that his rival should enjoy the embraces of the beautiful Helga. The fight is fiercely renewed, and Gunnlaug slays his perfidious opponent; but dies soon afterwards of the wound he has himself received,

when yet only in the twenty-first year of his age.

The remainder of the story is short and melancholy. The sorrowing Helga, her husband and lover both destroyed, is compelled to give her hand to Thorkell; a noble and wealthy Icelander. But these nuptials are equally joyless as the former. Her mind is wholly devoted to misery and gloom; and she sinks an early victim to the grave, bending her last looks upon a robe she had received from Gunnlaug, and dwelling with her last thoughts upon the memory of her unhappy lover.

CHAPTER XI.

A Gigantic Work. — Thorwaldsen's Funeral. — Common Phrases. — Some Words. — Jack and Jill. — Old Nick.

THE pre-eminent claim of Iceland to the world's grateful admiration is finely presented in a recent article in "The Edinburgh Review," on the first great lexicon of Icelandic words recently published, which cost ten years' labor of love by Richard Cleasby of the Craig House, Northumberland, Europe's unrivalled linguist, and Gudebrand Vigfusson, who succeeded him at his death.

Mr. Cleasby, while getting the materials at Copenhagen, March 25, 1844, attended the funeral of the illustrious Thorwaldsen, a native of Iceland; of which he says, "The king and queen, and whole royal family, were present at the service; and seven or eight thousand persons followed in the procession. That may be said of him which can be said of few,— he has not left his like behind him."

After speaking of the few remains of the ancient literature of other countries, including England, which are soon exhausted, turning enthusiastically to Iceland, he writes, "Far otherwise is it with the Icelandic, that noble language, the sole depository of literary treasures of Scandinavian races, which would have perished had it not been for faithful Ice-

land." Every tribe once traced their origin to Odin, or Wodin. Dr. Dasent says, "No other country in Europe possesses an ancient vernacular to be compared to this. No romance-literature, and the homilies, and works of religious edification, as well as those on physical and moral science, whether literary or philosophical, can compete with that of Iceland." The reviewer inquires, What could we do without such words as *call*, *skill*, *score*, *same*, *its*, *meeting*, *cast*, *skin* (hide is Anglo-Saxon), which are all of Icelandic or old Norse origin ?

A few samples of fugitive phrases from the lone island will reveal further our literary indebtedness to it: —

Brag (to boast), Icelandic *brag*, rumor, renown.

Chap, *kappi*, a fighting man, a hero.

Dandy, *dáindi*, any thing good ; *dáindis mati*, a worthy fellow. The word has certainly changed its signification considerably.

Fellow, *filag*, a comrade ; literally, one who goes shares in money.

To go the whole hog. This signifies, it is thought, to do all in one stroke, "hog" to be the Icelandic *högg*. The Icelanders similarly speak of doing something "me höggi," all at once.

Land-lubber. In the early part of last century, the word was spelt "loper;" "land-loper" was a vagabond who begged in the attire of a sailor, and the sea-phrase "land-lubber" was synonymous.

Ninny-hammer (a silly fellow). The old Norse used *einn-hammer* to signify a man in his right senses ; with *nei* before it, it would have a contrary meaning, and may have originated our word.

Ransack: Icelandic *ransacka* has the same meaning.

Skulk, skelk, fear, from the verb *skélka*, to frighten, related to *skjálfa*, to tremble.

Some translated Icelandic words and terms are added as a key to many others.

The letter *ā*, sounded like *ow*, is river, and is the ending of the names of the streams. *Bru* is bridge; therefore *Bruarā* is Bridge River. *Hvit* is white, and *vatn* water, which makes *Hvitavatn*, White Water. *Jokull* is pronounced *yo-kut-l*, or, in the rapid utterance of the Icelanders, *yokul*, the distinctive term applied to the ice-crowned mountains. *Fell* is pronounced *fee-et-l*, *fee-aht-l*, and *fee-at-l*, and designates other summits not capped with snow.

Bla is blue, *snae* snow; and we have *Blafell*, or a blue mountain, standing alone, an isolated peak in the middle of a plain. A celebrated mountain in the west of Iceland is *Snaefell Jokull* (*snef-el yo-kul*), a snowy mountain standing alone, and covered with perpetual ice; and thus, in the comprehensive language of the Icelanders, it is all expressed in two words. *Oroefa* signifies desert, or sandy plain, and *torf* is turf, or peat. There are two mountains, *Oroefa Jokull* and *Torfa Jokull*; one standing in a desert, and the other in a large peat-district. South of Hecla is a lofty and celebrated mountain, known as the *Eyjafjalla Jokull*. To the English reader, unacquainted with the Icelandic, it is a crooked-looking mouthful; but on the tongue of an Icelander it flows off a round, smooth, sonorous term. They call it *i-a-fe-aht-la yo-kull*. It defines itself as ice mountain of islands, having numerous knobs, or peaks, that

stand up like islands in the sea. Many Icelandic words are identical with the English, and many others nearly so. It remains for some future lexicographer to show the great number of English words derived from the Icelandic. *Hestr* is a horse, *holt* a hill, *hús* a house, *hval* a whale, *lang* long, *men* men, *madr* man, *sandr* sand, *sitha* the side, *litil* little, *mikla* large (Scottish, *muckle*), *fjorth* a firth or bay, *kirkja* a church, *prestur* a priest, *morgum* morning, *ux* ox, *daga* days. “July, or midsummer month,” stands literally in Icelandic, *Julius eda mithsumar-manuthur*. J, at the beginning of words and syllables in the Icelandic, is pronounced like *y* consonant, and in the middle of a syllable, like *i* or long *e*.

Their affirmative, *yes*, is *já* (pronounced *yow*), and their *no* is *nei* (nay). Their counting is much like ours: *einn* (1), *tveir* (2), *thrir* (3), *fjórir* (4), *fimm* (5), *sex* (6), *sjö* (7), *átta* (8), *niu* (9), *tiu* (10), *fimmtigir* (50), *hundrad* (100), *thusund* (1000). The date 1874 in words is “*einn thusund átta hundrad sjötigir og fjórir*.”

“Jack and Jill went up a hill
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down, and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.”

It is interesting to trace this familiar nursery rhyme to Iceland; to find there also the origin of many common phrases, whose origin not many well-read people suspect.

Jack and Jill are mentioned in the “Younger Edda,” under the names *Hjùki* and *Bil* (which have become, in course of time, Jack and Jill), as fetching

water from the well Byrgir. They were taken up into heaven to follow the moon. Hjùki signifies the quickening, Bil the failing ; and their attendance on the moon simply means that it waxes and wanes. The bucket of water evidently refers to the effect of the orb upon the weather.

It will be seen, that, like the Germans, Icelanders, when they want a new word, do not go to some foreign tongue, but manufacture one from their own language, and always describe forcibly the fresh thought or object for which it is needed.

We must even go to the Northmen to find “ Old Nick.” Hnikars was a title of Odin ; and, when he disappeared before the light of Christianity, “ Old Nick ” remained, and multiplied in the kingdoms from which he had retired. In Norway, *Nök* haunts lakes and rivers, demanding annually a human offering. In Sweden, *Neck* is a handsome young man, with his extremities like a horse ; a kind of water-centaur.

And here we have a bit of fairy romance, the moral of which is very beautiful.

“ Once upon a time, an old priest was ambling homewards on his nag ; and as, towards evenfall, he neared a pool, to his astonishment he saw a lad, naked to the waist, sitting on the surface of the water, his long golden curls floating over his delicate shoulders from beneath a jaunty red cap. The Neck held a shining harp in his hand ; and from it rang the sweetest harmony as he chanted, ‘ I know, I know that my Redeemer liveth.’

“ The old priest was indignant that a Neck should

apply these words to himself ; and in his zeal he cried to him, ‘ Why dost thou sound thy harp so gleefully, O Neck ? Sooner shall this dried cane that I hold in my hand grow green, and blossom, than *thou* shalt obtain salvation.’ Thereupon the gentle minstrel flung aside his harp, and rocked himself, bitterly weeping, on the water. The priest turned his horse, and continued his course. But, lo ! before he had proceeded far, he noticed that tender shoots and leaves began to bud forth from his old staff, soon bursting into most glorious and fragrant flowers ; so that, as the old man rode, he seemed like some saint bearing a branch from paradise. This seemed to him a sign from heaven, directing him to preach redemption after another fashion. He therefore hastened back, and found the sobbing Neck on his pool, which was full of water, ready to trickle over, like an eye full of tears just ere they fall.”

CHAPTER XII.

The Icelander's Home. — Dinner at Vidoe. — Occupations. — Dress. — Education. — Schools. — Pastoral Care. — Sabbath Scenes.

ODD homes have these enlightened Icelanders. The dwelling of a well-to-do farmer resembles a small village. The picture of Grettir's birthplace at Bjarni will furnish a partial view.

“How they build houses in a country with no trees and no brick-kilns,” is a natural and interesting question. We will look over a snug farmhouse, and see. Its front view, to begin with, is unlike that of any other civilized mortal's home. It is composed of half a dozen gable ends of low cottages, all joined together at the sides into a single habitation, facing the north. This point of the compass is the most common outlook. On the ridges are horns, or unpretending vanes; below them, doors painted red, in this instance, as the dwellings frequently have them. Excepting the few houses built of imported or drift wood, the roof is covered with grass, and the walls are blocks of lava, laid one upon the other, six feet in thickness, and four and a half high, making a miniature fortress. Over these rises the narrow archway of roof, whose rafters are the ribs of a whale, or whatever can be picked up, which will serve the purpose; and on these is spread the coarse turf.

Through it, here and there, the light enters by three or four inches square of glass and the opening over the kitchen-fire.

We go through a long narrow passage-way, from which are entrances to the different apartments. The bathstofa, or kitchen, is the most important of them to a hungry traveller. Around the forge-like fireplace, on the floor, or stored in corners, lie the few utensils for cooking. These prepare the sago-soup, the mutton, stock-fish, lichens, skier, and curds. Milk and "corn-brandy" are common. The lichens are made quite palatable by cooking. The skier is a kind of cheese, made of milk and rennet, and the curds not unlike those everywhere made from milk. The sour whey is the common drink. The stock-fish are the cod and haddock, split, the backbone removed, and dried fresh in the pure air and winds, then eaten like bread, with or without butter. The natives prefer the last article *sour*; in which condition the butter will keep for years.

The family bedroom is one apartment, with lockers on each side, under the low roof, resembling the berths in the ship's side of the hold. To a stranger accustomed to more space and better ventilation, they are not at first inviting.

In the few villages, many of the houses are built of imported lumber; and occasionally one is more spacious, and neatly finished and well furnished. Of the dwellings at the capital, as he saw them, "swept and garnished" for a holiday, Taylor writes, "The best houses in Reykjavik are very much alike. There is usually a hall about large enough to pull

off an overcoat in, then the reception-room, and beyond it the *salon* where the ladies receive their guests. White curtains, pots of flowers in the windows, a carpet on the floor, a sofa, centre-table with books and photographs, are the invariable features of this apartment; and the guest easily forgets both latitude and locality while conversing with a grave, earnest-faced young lady upon Shakspeare, German literature, or the latest music."

The summer-time is given to the business of the farm, including the cultivation of the few vegetables sometimes planted in the small gardens.

In the late winter and spring months, is gathered the harvest of the ocean, the abundance of fish. Men come from a great distance, in the darkness of the long night, to the coast, to engage in this indispensable yet rough occupation. With the meal and skier they get for their labor, they dry, and carry to their homes, the supply of fish on which they mainly depend for subsistence the rest of the year.

The stems and roots of the angelica are gathered for food, and eaten raw with butter, also the rumex; one species furnishing when steeped a pleasant beverage. The lichens are an important article of food. Of the diandria, and other willows and plants, ink and dyes are made.

To gather the *lichen islandicus* in the deserts of Skaaptar-fel, companies come from a great distance, and encamp among the rocks, transporting in their panniers on the backs of their ponies the gathered loads to the factory at Reykjavik, or elsewhere, and sell to the Danish merchants.

The wild corn, and other coarse products, are ground in hand-mills of original pattern, but resembling all similar manual machines.

During the winter imprisonment, as we should regard it, the men prepare for spring toil, and tend their flocks; the women dress the wool and eider-down, and look after the usual details of domestic life.

We will enter a home-circle upon one of the long winter nights. High winds toss the falling snow from the cliffs, and almost bury with a white mantle the humble dwelling. Parents, children, and domestics are seated on their lockers, or beds, in the principal apartment, under the light of the single lamp suspended from the ceiling. A member of the group designated takes from the shelf an ancient *Saga*, or *Shakspeare* or *Milton*, in their native language, and reads aloud, while the rest listen, with busy hands in various work.

Sometimes, owing to the scarcity of books in this "sequestered country," recitations from some favorite historical poem will be the entertainment. Such domestic scenes have been common for centuries in Iceland.

Very young children will read excellently, and write with elegance.

There are here, as everywhere, the abodes of poverty in rags; and there is generally, and naturally, from the scanty materials for building, the small houses in consequence, and the isolated manner of life, great indifference to neatness, often repulsive to strangers. Nor was there ever, from the days when

Norwegian vikings threw the bones at each other, their hands and mouths had picked, across Odin's hall, that regard for domestic refinements, so far as external habits are concerned, to which most nations, even those less enlightened, are accustomed. There was a rough civility at the festal board, and little care how they got their nightly rest.

They have a very matter-of-fact way of getting the next indispensable want to food supplied. For ages it has been customary, when a guest retired to his room, for the wife or daughter of the host to assist the traveller in preparing for rest. After depositing by his pillow a little lunch, the really modest attendant offers to "lend a helping hand" in the disrobing for the couch, whose covering she has turned down for his reception. When under the coverlet of down, and sinking into it beneath him, she tucks him up, and leaves him with a good-night kiss. Such has been for centuries the simple and sincere hospitality of the pure-hearted Icelanders.

Around the culinary department, are a bedroom, dairy, fuel-room, storehouse, outhouse, and sometimes a smithy.

No morning dawns on a night of rest, unless we dignify with the name of night, twilight for an hour or two. The sun is high in the heavens at six o'clock; when you do *not* look out of the window, having none, but only catch through a pane of glass in the roof, or a crevice, the gleams of the flood of light poured over the still landscape.

Soon after the wife or daughter enters with a cup of coffee for refreshment, before rising. Sipping this,

and making toilet, you emerge into the bathstofa, and thence into the glorious solitude of nature.

The kindly summons to breakfast breaks in upon quiet meditation, followed by a return to the bathstofa, to sit on a locker, with a plate in hand or on the knee, to be served with rarely cooked mutton, skyr, and, it may be, fresh fish and milk. It has been customary for men to eat first, the women following by themselves; not as a mark of inferiority, but a notion founded on their Hebrew ideas of the proper relation of the sexes, along with the inconvenience of all eating together. Especially is it an honorable custom for the ladies of the house, when guests are entertained, to wait upon the table.

Politeness is ingrained in their very natures. The humblest peasant lifts his cap to another when they meet. They shake hands together with the air of nobility. The "powdered weed" they carry in a horn flask like that we use for ammunition, and, throwing back the head, tip the small end into the nostril.

The Icelanders offer their hospitality freely to strangers; and as in the experience of a recent traveller, who, when he handed one of them money for showing him the way to a dwelling, laughingly ran away, do not expect nor desire compensation for trivial acts of friendly aid. Owing to their limited means, they do receive, and sometimes, like humanity the world over, ask, a high price for services requiring time and toil.

One could scarcely believe, without the testimony of some of England's noblest men, who were guests

sixty years ago, that such a dinner as we shall briefly describe could have been spread on the isle of Vidoe, among the eider-ducks, by Stiftsamptonan, or Ex-Gov. Stephensen, who had the sinecure of the island given him for life, in recognition of his "distinguished services." Sixty engravings hung on the walls of the house built of stone. The governor was dressed in full official suit,—coat of scarlet cloth, turned up with green, and ornamented with lace; pantaloons of blue cloth, trimmed with gold lace; half-boots with gold bindings; and three-cornered hat with gold tassels. But to the dinner. The ladies, as is the rule, were the waiters. They first served a large tureen of soup, made of sago, raisins, and claret; next, two boiled fresh salmon; then came another tureen, filled with boiled eggs of sea-fowl, with sauce of cream and sugar; the succeeding course was roast mutton, with prepared herbs; and, finally, waffles, with coffee and wines.

The worst of it is, it is expected that a guest, for the first time, will eat freely of each course, whether surfeited or not. To do otherwise would be an incivility.

The full dress of the fashionable ladies of the olden time was often gorgeous. Here is a sample, bought by a tourist half a century ago.

The underskirt is of blue cloth, with a waist of scarlet, ornamented with gold lace, and silver loop-holes for lacing it. Strips of black velvet cover the seams the whole length, and similar ones of blue fabric, stamped, run across the bottom. Over the waist is worn a jacket of black cloth, having on its

front two strips, same color, and a like number of gold lace. Upon the shoulders and back are slips of orange velvet. The belt is black velvet, with rich silver-gilt ornaments. The ruff is of the material in the belt, black and crimson, bright with silver lace ; and, connected with it, a tippet of rich black and brown velvet.

Plated silver chains and medals were also worn.

With all these trappings upon a beautiful form, the fair Icelander must have presented a very striking contrast to the world around her ; especially if she were walking out upon the *lava* pavement, under the shadow of some savage cliff, with only the ever-present raven for her companion. If going to church or a reception, a cloak of wadmal, fastened by three large, convex, figured silver buttons, was thrown over her shoulders. The head-dress was made of white linen or cotton, shaped like a large flat horn, leaning forwards. On horseback (the side-saddle somewhat like the circular seat of an arm-chair), she wore over that a conical cap, completely covering and protecting it. A tall "beaver" of the sugar-loaf style, without a brim, would give a good idea of this curious covering.

The girls and boys wore gaudy little caps.

The men have not been peculiar and showy in their wardrobe since the ancient days of the nobility and chieftains. Their jackets of wadmal have a resemblance to our sacks, and their hats to the common felts. They are quite equal to the average American physically.

Their height is medium, or a little below ; com-

plexion very light and ruddy; hair blonde, and seldom curled; their eyes blue or gray; and their "build" compact, rather than graceful. Their general physique does not, however, differ materially from that of the Anglo-Saxon.

Physicians have never been numerous in Iceland, for two reasons: invalids do not abound, and the patients are scattered sparsely over the wild country. Sometimes the doctor's circuit will have a diameter of a hundred miles or more. Four physicians have the island in charge, one each to the four divisions. There are no homœopaths, electricians, or hydropaths there.

The world's "peacemakers" have never been wanting in Iceland. No visitor to a metropolis of our day listens to keener retorts, more artful evasions, or sharper chicanery, than were heard in the Althing, long before a parliament sat in London.

But, unlike our present, they had no "members of the bar," as such. All the leading men were their own attorneys; from boyhood studying the verbal, and then the written enactments by which they were governed.

Everybody must have an education in Iceland. Reflect upon this marvel of history,—in such a country, in mere huts, amid loneliest, barrenest solitudes, culture that would shine in the most brilliant circles of our "best society." Such triumphs of mind and heart as this nation presents have no parallel in all the wide world's arena of knowledge and virtue.

The school-year is from October to the end of May; the remaining four months of vacation are

devoted to rural pursuits, in which all classes are to share.

After mastering Latin, and making some progress in Hebrew and Greek, with the rules of interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, the student becomes a *demissus*; that is, leaves school to *study at home*. Here he reads ecclesiastical history, homiletics, &c. Some scholars, in addition, visit Copenhagen or Stockholm, or both, to complete their general culture.

Most of the churches and families have libraries, in which “light literature,” beyond the *romances* of the old Sagas, has no place.

A vast number of manuscripts on various subjects, from Sagas to science, have been deposited in libraries at the Danish capital, and transferred to private collections. Excepting the few who attend the academical course at Reykjavik, the children pursue their studies under the parental roof. We have a pleasant sketch of this part of domestic life, in Mr. Byrce’s “Impressions of Iceland.” In one regard “the women of Iceland have obtained completer equality than their sisters in Continental Europe. They receive exactly the same education as the men do. There are no schools in the islands, naturally, as families live mostly a dozen miles apart; and instruction is therefore given by the father to his sons and daughters alike and together; the priest—where there is a priest—sometimes adding a little Latin or Danish. Thus the girl learns all her parents can teach her; and is as good an arithmetician, and as familiar with the Sagas, as her brothers. Accomplish-

ments, of course, are pretty well out of the question ; painting, not only from the difficulty of procuring materials, but because there is really nothing to paint ; dancing, because you can seldom gather a sufficiently large party, and have no rooms big enough ; instrumental music, on account of the impossibility of transporting a piano over rocks and bogs on the back of a pony. Nevertheless, we found in a remote house (a good wood house, by the way) upon the coast, where we were hospitably entertained for a day and night, not only a piano, but several young ladies who could play excellently on it, and a guitar, accompanying themselves to songs in four or five languages ; the Swedish, as we thought, the prettiest of all."

Their drinking customs are those of the times before the temperance lecturer was abroad, and who has not yet visited Iceland. Wine or corn-brandy is always offered to guests, yet drunkenness is comparatively rare. They have not the temptation of social excitements, nor have they ever seen the blighting curse of alcohol as it is forced upon our observation in constant and wide-spread ruin.

CHAPTER XIII.

An Icelandic Funeral. — A Wedding. — Kissing. — Peril of an Ignorant Bride. — The Parish Church Scene. — Religious Character. — Parish Register. — Yule.

WE have from a spectator a sketch of an Icelander's funeral. The body of a sailor who died upon the sea was borne to the beach, where it was met by the clergyman, dressed in his priestly robe. The small procession moved toward the narrow enclosure of unmarked mounds, the minister chanting as they entered it, joined by the people, till the plain coffin rested in its lava-grave.

With a wooden spade he then threw a little earth on it, repeating words like those in the beautiful burial-service, "Dust to dust," &c.

The chanting followed again, until the grave was filled. Then, in silence, the group placed their hats before their faces in prayer. With a reverent bow of respect and farewell to the dead, they walked with serious air away. To this the marriage-ceremony furnishes a pleasant contrast. The bride in full dress, attended by her mother, is seated one side of the parish church. On the opposite side is the bridegroom in sealskin slippers fastened by cross-bands of white tape, and striped garters around about his legs, accompanied by his friends, indulging in the common luxury

of snuff. The pastor commences the service with a chant, and those present follow him. After prayer the happy couple come forward to listen to the long exhortation. The usual questions are asked, and the hands joined by the clergyman, who also lays his hands in benediction upon their shoulders. They are conducted to their separate seats, and chanting closes the wedding.

Upon leaving the church the bride leads the procession, with her group of female friends ; the bridegroom follows with his company. After the supper the bride retires ; and, when her new lord arrives at the apartment, he finds it barricaded with the friends of the bride. He is not permitted to pass them until he pledges a generous gift to his wife.

A clergyman might decline to marry a couple if the bride were unable to read.

The old Northmen's statute fined a man, for kissing an unmarried woman without her consent, three marks of silver ; money enough to buy a suit of clothes. If the victim were a wife or widow, *exclusion* was the penalty ; that is, imprisonment within certain limits around his home for months or years. Elopement was punished with banishment.

Surely fair lips and peaceful homes were protected, by the strong arm of the law, against any other arm more tangible, yet less dreaded by lovers. A kiss is now the common "good-night" and morning salutation, and whenever they meet each other by the wayside.

The following story from the Laxdaela-Saga will serve to show in what light marriage was regarded in

Iceland, and in what a very equivocal manner a *mater-familias* sometimes exercised her authority.

Olaf, the son of Höskuld and Melkorka, was accompanied, we are told, on his return from Norway, where he had been to purchase timber, by one of his old sea-roving friends, named Geirmund, at whose house he had passed the winter. Geirmund, in his turn, became the winter guest of Olaf in Iceland, and soon fell in love with that chieftain's daughter, the beautiful Thurida.

Olaf, though he was very fond of his Norwegian friend, would not hear talk of a marriage. Geirmund, seeing that he had no chance of succeeding with the young lady's father, began to flatter her mother Thorgerda, and, by dint of entreaties and costly presents, at length obtained her consent. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp ; Olaf inviting his numerous friends and dependents to a sumptuous feast in a large banqueting-hall he had recently erected, the walls of which were hung with tapestry representing the story of Baldur and the prowess of Thor. When Geirmund had passed three years in the married state, he began to weary of his wife ; and Thorgerda was at length obliged to tell her husband that she had ascertained that their son-in-law intended to return to Norway, leaving Thurida and her daughter Groa without making any provision for their support. Olaf said the marriage was her doing, not his ; and, instead of showing any sign of displeasure, he was more friendly than usual with Geirmund, and even made him a present of a fine trading-vessel, being probably very glad to get rid of him. Geir-

mund went on board this vessel, and was waiting only for a favorable wind, when one morning, at break of day, Thurida entered the cabin when he was asleep, placed her child in his bed, and, taking a splendid sword which she knew he set great value on, got into her boat, and told her men to row off again.

Geirmund awoke at the moment, and, becoming aware of what had happened, called on his wife to come back, and take Groa, and return him his sword ; for which he offered to give her any sum she might think proper to demand. Thurida told him that she would do no such thing ; that he had acted dishonorably towards her, and that they were no longer man and wife ; and accordingly returned home, and gave Geirmund's sword to her cousin Bolli. Thurida, after this proceeding, could of course re-marry ; and we presume, that, in those days, the want of maternal affection she had evinced by exchanging her only child for a sword, would not have prevented her from finding a second husband.

The Icelander's religious faith has for centuries been very simple, and often, as everywhere, superficial ; but infidelity, in its multiplying forms among us, is unknown.

If no other volumes are in his dwelling, the Bible, and books for church-services, are there ; and, in their scattered homes, prayer and praise ascend to the infinite Father and Saviour of all who trust in him.

Before setting out on a journey, it has been the custom to invoke a blessing ; and, when the fishing-boat was ready, for the crew, reverently placing their

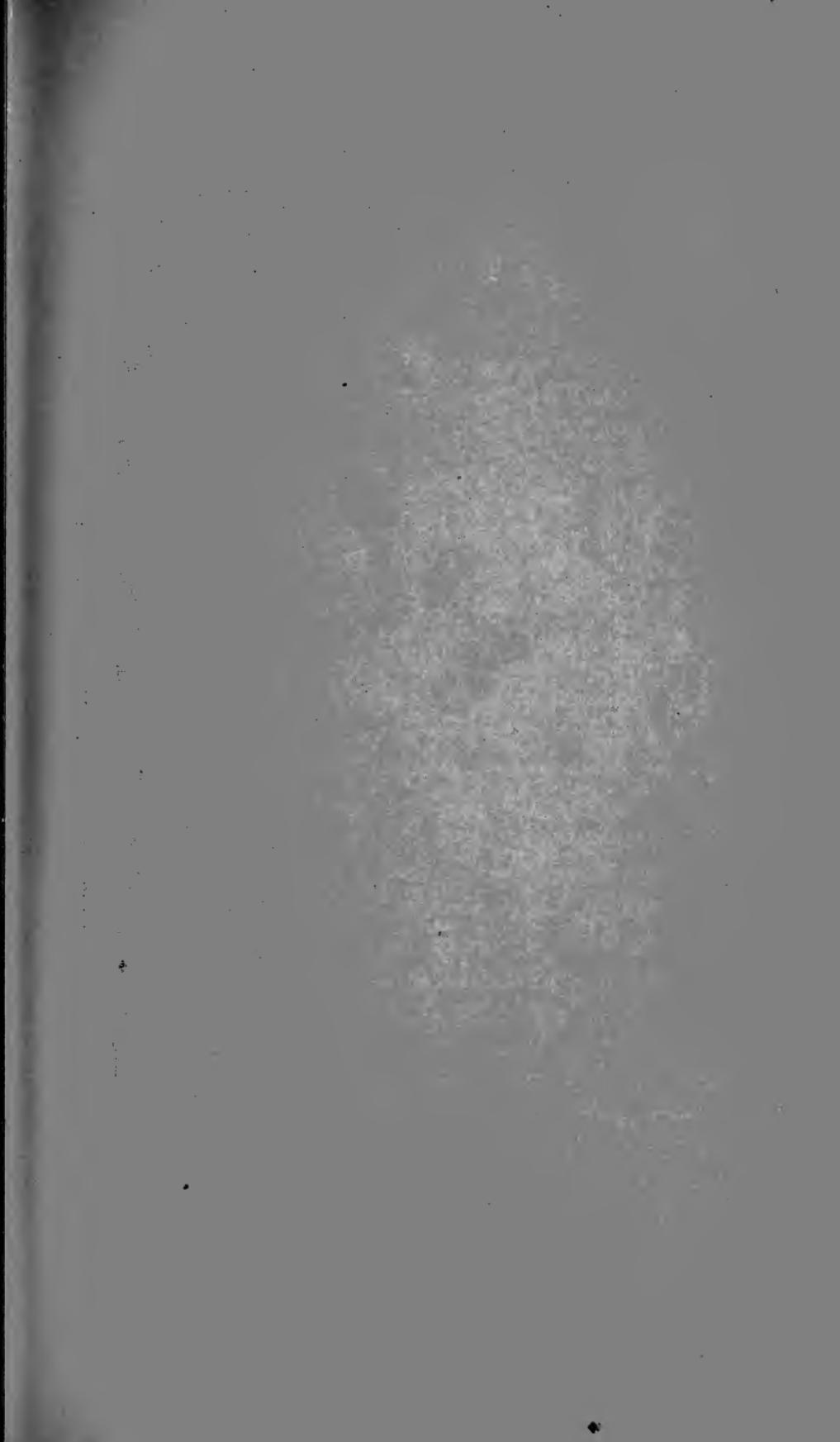
hats before their faces, to pray for success and safety, repeating the same ceremony upon reaching their destination.

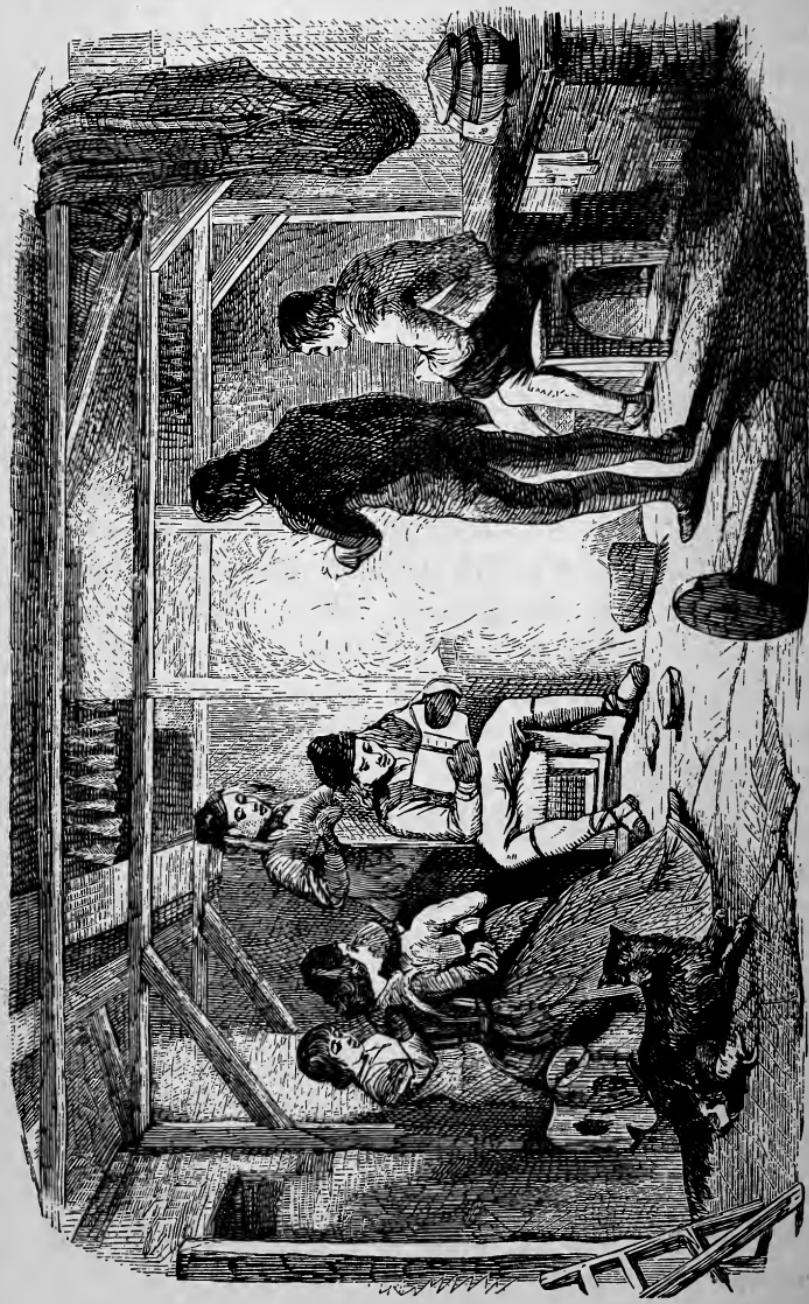
In seasons of great calamity, days of public fasting and prayer were appointed.

The Icelander's sabbath, like that of colonial New England, which has not yet wholly disappeared from its valleys, commences at six o'clock Saturday evening, and closes the same hour the following day. To have made *sunset* the evening limit would give three hours of day in midwinter, and nearly twenty-three in summer. Baronet Mackenzie's picture is touching, in its simplicity, of the sabbath scenes, the religious character of the people, and the pastor's relation to his parish.

“ The ordinary service of the churches, in Iceland, consists of prayer, psalms, a sermon, and readings from the Scriptures. The prayers and readings are rather chanted than spoken by the priest, who performs this part of the service at the altar of the church. The sermons appear in general to be previously composed, and are delivered from notes. Of the style and character of these compositions, we had not the means of forming an accurate judgment; but, in those instances where we attended the public worship of the country, it seemed from the warm and impassioned manner of their delivery, and from the frequent use of the figure of interrogation, that a powerful appeal was made to the feelings, as well as to the understanding, of the audience. In the conduct of the religious service, much decorum is maintained.

“ The moral and religious habits of the people at large may be spoken of in terms of the most exalted commendation. In his domestic capacity the Icelander performs all the duties which his situation requires, or renders possible ; and while, by the severe labor of his hands, he obtains a provision of food for his children, is it not less his care to convey to their minds the inheritance of knowledge and virtue. In his intercourse with those around him, his character displays the stamp of honor and integrity. His religious duties are performed with cheerfulness and punctuality ; and this even amidst the numerous obstacles which are afforded by the nature of the country, and the climate under which he lives. The sabbath scene at an Icelandic church is one of the most singular and interesting kind. The little edifice, constructed of wood and turf, is situated perhaps amid the rugged ruins of a stream of lava, or beneath mountains which are covered with never-melting snows ; in a spot where the mind almost sinks under the silence and desolation of surrounding nature. Here the Icelanders assemble to perform the duties of their religion. A group of male and female peasants may be seen gathered about the church, waiting the arrival of their pastor ; all habited in their best attire, after the manner of the country, their children with them ; and the horses, which brought them from their respective homes, grazing quietly around the little assembly. The arrival of a new-comer is welcomed by every one with the kiss of salutation ; and the pleasures of social intercourse, so rarely enjoyed by the Icelanders, are





INTERIOR OF ICELANDER'S HOME. — Page 83.

happily connected with the occasion which summons them to the discharge of their religious duties. The priest makes his appearance among them as a friend: he salutes individually each member of his flock, and stoops down to give his almost parental kiss to the little ones who are to grow up under his pastoral charge. These offices of kindness performed, they all go together into the house of prayer."

The young people are certainly sensible in relation to marriage, which usually takes place between the ages of twenty-five and thirty. In the year 1858 there were four hundred and eighty-seven weddings, and in no instance were the parties under twenty. There were three suicides, sixty-five drowned, seventeen died of other accidents, and nineteen hundred and thirty-nine of disease. Four hundred and eighty-nine children died between the ages of one and five, and only sixty-eight between five and ten. Fifteen persons lived to be over ninety, and five to be nearly a century old.

We have a page copied from the records kept by a quiet, faithful pastor.

There are two views, through the lattice-work of this record, into the interior life of the Icelanders,—their moral and religious culture, and the origin of surnames.

The pastoral care is next to the parental, in watchful oversight of the family, without interfering at all with the proper authority of the father and mother. The presence of the preacher is not dreaded as an interference with domestic order or social freedom and innocent pleasures.

PARISH REGISTER.

Names of Habitations.	Names of the people in the family.	Situation, Occupation, &c.	Age.	Confirmed.	Commun.	Whether able to read.	Conduct.	General Abilities, &c.
Storborn	Gudrun Sigurdardottir. Oddur Jonsson. Hans Jonsson. Ingiborg Jonsdottir. Gudrun Jonsdottir. Wigfus Gudmundson.	Widow and owner of the house. Widow's son. Do. Widow's daughter. Do. An orphan kept by the widow. -	57 19 19 18 17 15	Yes Do. Do. Do. Do. No	Yes Do. Do. Do. Do. Do.	Yes Do. Do. Do. Do. No	Clean and indus- trious. A good boy. Clever at work. A hopeful girl. Equally good. A tractable boy.	Well informed. Well educated. Not so good an under- standing as his brother. Well informed. Above mediocrity in her abilities. Good understanding.
Thyrrill	Jorundr Gislasson. Margret Thorstensdottir. Gudrun Eireksdottir. Gudrun Grimson. Thorsdys Seimnsdottir. Jarfrudr Stephanasdottir. Hristia Jonsdottir. Waldi Sterinderson.	Hrepstiore, elder, or constable. His wife. Her daughter by a former husband. Servant man. Maid servant. Her child A female orphan. A male orphan.	41 53 19 25 42 3 8 6	Yes Do. Do. Do. Do. — — —	Yes Do. Do. Do. Do. — — —	Yes Do. Do. Do. Do. — — —	Well disposed and clean. Good character. A hopeful girl. A faithful laborer. Neat and faithful. A tractable child. Tractable and. obedient.	Moderate abilities. Piously disposed. Well informed. He has neglected his im- provement, and is there- fore admonished. Well informed. Has finished her cate- chism; to be confirmed. Is learning the catechism.

The books in this house are, The New Psalm-Book; Vidallin's Sermons; Thoughts on the Nativity of Christ; Psalms relating to the Passion of Christ; The Conversation of the Soul with Itself; Thoughts on the Passion; Diarium; Thordir's Prayers; the New Testament; and a Psalm-Book.

The books in this house are, The Old Psalm-Book, and the New One; Vidallin's Sermons; Vidallin's Doctrines of Religion; Fast Sermons; Seven Sermons; Psalm-Books; Sturmi's Meditations translated into Icelandic; Bible Extracts; Baetholm's Religious Doctrine; a Prayer-Book; and a New Testament belonging to the church.

In christening the children, the boy's name is taken from the Christian name of his father, adding *son* to it; and the daughter adds *dottir* in the same manner.

Yule, or Christmas, has ever been the anticipated holiday at the north, as it is, indeed, by the young everywhere. In towns the women go forth with lanterns to the markets, to make purchases for the joyous occasion; the fabulous Santa Claus contributes to the excitement; and feasting, wine, and revelry have been the unfailing variety in this annual gathering. Old and young enter into the festivities and amusements with an enthusiasm which lights up with intensest social pleasure the long winter of darkness relieved diurnally only by a dismal noon.

CHAPTER XIV.

Phenomena of the Heavens. — Mock Suns. — Storm Rings. — Aurora. — Meteors. — Tempests. — Icelander's Wealth. — Domestic Animals. — Swans and Ravens. — The Eider-Duck, and its Down. — The Sacred Bird. — Reindeer. — Salmon-Festival. — Sheep Gathering.

THE Icelanders have, for their alternately long days and nights, fine displays upon the skies; while the same kind we have here are much more beautiful in their pure, transparent air.

Mock suns, sometimes *nine* of them at once, will blaze around the “king of day.” When thickening haze changes the blue to gray, brilliant storm-rings herald the coming tempest.

Night, with the twilight, has her peculiar glories. It is Christmas, a little after one o’clock in the afternoon. We walk out to watch the declining sun from the hill. The iron cliffs are tipped and belted with golden light, until the brown heather wears a blush of deepest hue. The sea flashes back the farewell splendor, as the orb sinks for a score of hours beneath the horizon.

The colors fade gradually into the starry night, and away to the north come out the scarlet streamers of the aurora. From the zenith they stretch to the horizon, swaying and quivering as if they were moved by the frosty wind, until the grim rock be-

neath and around glows in the mystical radiance they fling over the dark "Maid of the North;" as the Icelanders fondly call their cherished island. We have no more than a faint idea of this exhibition on an arctic sky.

Then such meteors as dart across the arch, with their transient lines of silver, in quick succession!

But there are great contrasts to these: winter nights, when the hurricane rages and howls till the lava-houses tremble, and the heavens seem a frightful chaos of warring elements; or when the snow comes down in blinding storms, and buries all the blackness of mountain and valley and plain with its drifted wealth of crystal mist from the frost-king's arctic stores.

The wild beauty of the northern scenery struck the poetic soul of Alfieri, as it must that of every other traveller of genius and sensibility. He was moved by the magnificent splendor of its winter nights; and, above all, by the rapid transition from the rudeness of that season to the mild bloom of spring.

"Oh! 'tis the touch of fairy hand
That wakes the spring of northern land.
It warms not there by slow degrees,
With changeful pulse, the uncertain breeze;
But sudden on the wondering sight
Bursts forth the beam of living light,
And instant verdure springs around,
And magic flowers bedeck the ground."

The graceful swan and the eider-duck are the only birds valuable to the Icelander. They furnish him

quills and down for his own use, and for market. The swans are killed upon the solitary lakes. But the *harvesting* of down, and the habits of the duck, are too interesting to pass without a visit to their favorite island Vidoe. And no better companion to describe what we can see on Vidoe, can we have than Baronet Mackenzie, the polished, gentle, truthful historian of Iceland. It is early June.

“ The eider-ducks had now assembled in great numbers to nestle : at all other times of the year these birds are perfectly wild. They are protected by the laws, a severe penalty being inflicted on any person who kills one. During the breeding season, the fine is thirty dollars for each bird. As our boat approaches the shore, we pass through multitudes of these beautiful fowls, which scarcely give themselves the trouble to go out of the way. Between the landing-place and the old governor’s house, the ground is strewed with them ; and it requires some caution to avoid treading on the nests. The drakes walk about, uttering a sound very like the cooing of doves, and are even more familiar than the common domestic ducks. All around the house, on the garden-wall, on the roofs, and even in the inside of the houses, and in the chapel, are ducks sitting on their nests.

“ Such as have not been long on the nest leave it on being approached ; but those that have more than one or two eggs sit perfectly quiet, suffering us to touch them, and sometimes making a gentle use of their bills to remove our hands. If a drake happens to be near his mate, he is extremely agitated if any one approaches her. He passes and repasses between

her and the object of his suspicion, raising his head, and cooing.

“ The nests are lined with down, which the duck takes from her own breast ; and there is a sufficient quantity laid around the nest for covering up the eggs when the duck goes to feed, which is generally during the time of low water. The down, which is a valuable article of commerce, is removed at two different times from the nest. Sometimes the poor duck is compelled to provide a fourth lining ; and, when her down is exhausted, the drake supplies the deficiency.

“ A certain number of eggs is also removed, as they are esteemed a great delicacy. Our good friend at Vidoë used to send us two hundred at a time. When boiled hard, they are tolerably good, but much inferior to the eggs of common poultry. Swan’s eggs are superior, and really excellent, when boiled hard.

“ When taken from the nest, the eider-down is mixed with feathers and straws. To separate them, and make the down fit for market, is part of the employment of the women during winter. As soon as the young birds leave the eggs, the duck takes them on her back, and swims to a considerable distance from the shore. She then dives, and leaves the little ones to exercise themselves in swimming about. As soon as they have the use of their feet in this way, the duck returns, and becomes their guide. Several broods, often great numbers, join company, and are seen quite wild for a few weeks ; after which they totally disappear.”

The wealth of the Icelandic farmer is estimated by the number of his horses, cows, and sheep. No swine have an enclosure near his house; no geese and ducks float on the waters, and salute him with the music so familiar to the yeomanry of other lands. His Esquimau dog is his only domestic animal, excepting very small ones, often haunting the interior of his habitation. Rats and mice do not gambol under his roof of turf, nor in the solid walls: he does not, therefore, need the services of the cat, excepting in Danish factories, in a few of the towns, to which cats were brought over in ships.

The ravens in pairs make themselves at home around every dwelling, to devour such garbage as may be thrown within their reach. You can see, everywhere, these sombre birds perched on the house-tops, or ledges not far distant.

The raven held the highest rank among birds in the old mythology of the north. We have an illustration in the battle of Thromund and Thorbiorre, who interpret the prophecies of the bird:—

THR.

“ Hark! the *raven’s* croak I hear:
 Lo! the bird of fate is near.
 In the dawn, with dusky wings,
 Hoarse the song of death she sings.
 Thus in days of yore she sang,
 When the din of battle rang,
 When the hour of death drew nigh,
 And mighty chiefs were doomed to die.

THOR.

The *raven* croaks; the warriors slain
 With blood her dusky wings distain;

Tired, her morning prey she seeks,
And with blood and carnage reeks.
Thus, perched upon an aged oak,
The boding bird was heard to croak;
When all the plain with blood was spread,
Thirsting for the mighty dead.”

The great varieties of arctic birds, many of them the most beautiful in the world, excepting a few gorgeous natives of tropical lands, are found in Iceland. Here the mysterious auk has had for ages his home ; the razor-bill, who, to teach his young to fly, carries them on his back out to sea, and, diving, leaves them to paddle their way along ; the gay puffin ; the graceful tern ; the piratical skua, who snatches his prey from the bills of gulls and gannets ; the solan-goose, with black-bordered plumage ; the magnificent snowy owl ; and, to crown this partial list, there is the swift falcon, now the national bird of the island.

The noble reindeer, the Laplander’s dependence, was imported into Iceland a century ago ; and in some parts of the interior roams in large herds, but is left quite unmolested.

Polar bears sometimes make a voyage of pleasure on icebergs from Greenland, but find themselves on unfriendly shores, and soon fall before the weapons of the natives.

On the last of July occurs the salmon-catching festival. For a few days before, across the Lax Elbe, six miles from Reykjavik, and near its confluence with the sea, a net has lain to keep the fish, returning after the spawning season, from escaping to the ocean. Smaller nets, upon the appointed day, are

stretched across the stream. Hundreds of the Icelanders, in their best attire, on horseback and afoot, hasten to the banks of the river. Bishops, high officials, the lady and her washerwoman, all are there ; their faces beaming with joy, and the most perfect social equality and freedom visible. Women of rank sit, gayly clad, in easy and richly-carved side-saddles, holding in their right hand the rein, and in the left a whip of black leather, prettily variegated with the white quills of the eider-duck interwoven in the braids. The women in humbler life ride after the fashion of men. The gathering companies recline in groups on rocks, with their lunch of dried fish and butter, or skyr, chatting merrily ; while the Danes wash down salmon-sandwiches with corn-brandy or rum. Then follows the fishing. Into the water they go, men and women, many up to their waists, snatching at the swarming fish, and throwing those caught on the shore. There they are counted, and thrown into the wooden panniers for transportation. Away from a fair lady's hand flies a noble salmon at an unsuspecting gentleman, followed by a ringing peal of laughter. After enjoying the joke, she advances, compliments her victim upon his skill as a fisherman, and very politely offers her hand for a cordial shake. Often before three o'clock the same afternoon, more than two thousand salmon have been caught by the busy hands of the jovial throng ; and the cavalcade prepare to move homeward again.

The annual sheep-gathering has been always one of the most exciting events in the routine of Iceland-life.

In the spring, excepting the few needed at home for milk or food, the thousands of sheep are led away, in long lines of white and black, to the interior, to pick their food upon rocks and in the defiles among the mountains. When autumn returns, notice is given in all the churches, that, upon a designated time and place, the farmers will meet to organize the sheep-hunting, according to ancient custom. In the open air the meetings are held ; the king, as he is called, with two assistants appointed, and the bands selected. The morning arrives ; and the cavalcades move to a centre of the vast wild pasture-land, pitch the tents, which are left in charge of children taken along for the purpose, and away the practised shepherds diverge, among loneliest glens, cavernous depths, and upon dizzy heights, to seek the scattered flocks, and guide them back to headquarters. Thus the search goes on, till a district of many square miles is scoured, when the camp is removed to another point, and the search repeated.

When the broad region of feeding is gone over, the flocks are gathered in some valley, and around a large enclosure, near which are smaller folds. Then the work of separation begins, each owner's mark deciding the number to be removed to his fold. Sometimes the same mark by two farmers, or unreturning sheep, creates collisions of feeling, if expressed only by angry words ; but soon all this is over, and social and festal enjoyment follows.

The whole scene is one of pleasing interest, peculiar to Iceland ; and an illustration of scriptural teaching is readily drawn from the narrative.

So extravagant are the ideas of many, of the climate, that we copy a page from a journal of the year 1810, which gives the daily temperature of weather for the month of January, of one of the severest winters ever known on the island, when icebergs so beleaguered it that the open sea could not be seen from the tops of the highest accessible mountains.

Jan. 1. Ther.

- 44° S.S.E. The gale continued the whole day, blowing hard, with showers of rain.
- “ 2. 43° S.S.E. Blew hard all day; but calm towards night.
- “ 3. 37° S.S.W. Fine mild day, with rain towards night.
- “ 4. 36° E.N.E. Mild weather, with a little rain; frost at night.
- “ 5. 33° E.N.E. Fine mild weather.
- “ 6. 37° E.N.E. Fine day; a few showers, which in some places became ice.
- “ 7. 34° S.E. Blew hard all day, with rain; and during the night came on a gale of wind.
- “ 8. 36° S.E. A heavy gale of wind the whole day.
- “ 9. 37° Showers of rain; before morning a hurricane.
- “ 10. 35° S.S.E. Heavy squalls of wind and rain all day; frost at night.
- “ 11. 33° N. Blew hard most of the day; calm at night, with rain and frost.
- “ 12. 36° N. Mild weather, but frost at night.
- “ 13. 32° N. Fine day; the whole face of the country like glass.
- “ 14. 28° N.E. Dark day; snow in the evening.
- “ 15. 26° N. Fine weather.
- “ 16. 21° N. Fine day; snow at night.

Jan. 17. Ther.

22° N.E. Fine day; snow at night.

" 18° N.E. Fine day, and frost at night; when it blew hard with hail, snow, thunder, and lightning: the latter not uncommon in the winter.

" 19. 27° S.S.W. Heavy fall of snow the whole day.

" 20. 24° N.E. Heavy snow the whole day, and very dark.

" 21. 23° N.E. Fine weather, but heavy snow at night.

" 22. 28° N. Fine day.

" 23. 33° S.E. Mild weather, and a little rain; at night blew very hard, with hail and rain.

" 24. 25° S.W. Blew a very hard gale of wind the whole twenty-four hours, with showers of hail.

" 25. 27° S.W. Blew hard in the morning, but was moderate at night.

" 26. 8° N.W. Fine weather; blowing fresh, which increased to a gale of wind.

" 27. 10° N. Blew a tremendous heavy gale of wind the whole twenty-four hours.

" 28. 8° N. The gale still blowing.

" 29. 10° N. " " Sea frozen from the land out to the islands (about a quarter of a mile), and strong enough to bear a horse.

" 30. 16° N. Moderate weather.

" 31. 16° E.N.E. Blew very hard all day, and towards night a gale of wind.

It will be noticed that the lowest degree reached in that fearful winter was 8° above zero; while, in New England, often the thermometer is as many below.

CHAPTER XV.

Fairy-Land. — Witchcraft. — Berkserkers. — Superstitions of Domestic Life. — Signs and Omens. — A Ghostly Saga.

WHAT wonder that superstition, in such a land as Iceland, should fill the untrodden depths of its solitudes with all the unearthly beings that ever haunted the human imagination ? that not only the young, but the oldest among the scattered population, should look timidly into the darkness of their long winter nights, made weird by auroral flashes, to see some apparition start from the mountain caves and dells ; or listen to hear the sound of spirit voices upon the viewless winds, as they come moaning from the sea, whose arms lie among formidable heights ?

Witchcraft ! where has not this delusion had its day ? Even the Pilgrim Fathers of Iceland had to fight the witches. Who can marvel at it, when the whole country looks as if goblins had been permitted to build it upon the ocean-bed, to suit their own unearthly fancies ; reserving dark caverns and winding ravines no human foot has threaded, or ever will enter ? For a while they were permitted to play their wild antics. The infatuation became so frightful, law made it criminal, and its victims suffered death.

Matron and maiden sank under the green waters of the pool at Thingvalla.

The witches, such as they were, at last disappeared, as will the revelations, if not all the mysteries, of the "Spiritism" of our own time; for against the pretensions of both we are cautioned in the completest Revelation from heaven, of the mind and heart of God. Says the poet-prophet Isaiah, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"

Inquired a traveller, a few years since, of his guide,—

"Do you believe in spirits, Zöega?"

"Oh, yes, sir! and don't you? I've seen them many a time. I once saw a spirit nearly as large as the Skjaldbraid. It came up out of the earth directly before me where I was travelling, and shook its head as if warning me to go back. I was badly frightened, and turned my horse around, and went back. Then I heard that my best friend was dying. When he was dead I married his wife. She's a very good woman, sir; and, if you please, I'll get her to make you some coffee when we get back to Reykjavik."

The dragon and the giant, who guarded the island before human footsteps were there, were natural creations in the fancy of a pagan people.

It was the same with the genii of Mount Hecla, and the blackbirds armed with beaks of iron, which haunted the ravines and caverns of that volcanic

peak, forbidding the ascent of any daring intruder.

The lingering influence of the superstitions of ages was curiously expressed in the address of Chief Justice Stephensen to his countrymen, during Iceland's only revolution, elsewhere noticed. It began,—

“Odin's goddesses, Bellonæ, afflict our northern countries,” referring to the English.

Another remarkable superstition, which Snorro Sturleson ascribes to Odin himself, was that of the Berserkers. They were evidently “men of weak judgment and a depraved imagination,” who became almost involuntary agents of these apparently magical influences; while others were impostors, succeeding through the superstition and terror of those around them.

They were wrestlers or warriors by profession, who were believed by magical means to have hardened their bodies, so that they could not be injured by fire or sword. These men, roused at times by their incantations into a sort of frenzy, committed every species of brutal violence; rushed naked into battle, and overpowered and slew all who ventured to approach them; till, deserted by the paroxysm, their supernatural strength left them, and they immediately sunk into a state of extreme debility and wretchedness. Many records of this strange superstition occur in the old Icelandic and Norwegian writings. It gradually disappeared, together with other practices of magic and divination.

A story from one of the earliest Sagas, translated by Sir Walter Scott, is a startling picture of the old superstitions of Iceland.

A ship from Iceland chanced to winter in a haven near Helgafels. Among the passengers was a woman named Thorgunna, who was reported by the sailors to possess garments and household furniture of a fashion far surpassing those used in Iceland.

The vain and covetous Thurida, sister of the pontiff Snorro, and wife of Thorodd, desiring to behold these treasures, visited the stranger, who refused to display them.

Thorgunna, however, being pressed by Thurida, consented to take up her abode at the house of Thorodd, saying, that, as she was skilled in all domestic arts, she trusted in that manner to discharge *all* obligation she might lie under to the family. She then reluctantly accompanied her hostess to Froda, the home of Thorodd; where, after the arrival of an immense chest and cabinet, she displayed to the curious and covetous eyes of Thurida such an embroidered bed-coverlet, and such a splendid and complete set of tapestry hangings and bed-furniture of English linen, interwoven with silk, as Iceland's matrons had never beheld.

“Sell to me,” said the envious Thurida, “this fair bed-furniture.” Thorgunna replied, “Believe me, I will not lie upon straw to feed thy vanity;” an answer that effectually stopped the matron's importunity. Thorgunna, to whose character subsequent events added something of mystical solemnity, is described as being a woman of a tall and stately appearance, of a dark complexion, and having a profusion of black hair. She was advanced in age, industrious, devout, grave, silent, and solemn in

domestic society. She had little intercourse with Thorodd's household, and especially disliked two of its inmates; the one, Thorer, who, having lost a leg in combat, was named Thorer-Widlegr (wooden-leg) from the substitute he had adopted; the other, Thorer's wife, Thorgrima, called Galldrakinna (wicked sorceress) from her supposed skill in enchantments. Kiarten, the son of Thurida, a boy of excellent promise, was the only person of the household to whom Thorunna showed much affection; and she was much vexed, at times, when the capricious petulance of the child made indifferent return for her kindness.

After this mysterious stranger had dwelt at Froda for some time, and while she was laboring in the hay-field with other members of the family, a sudden cloud from the northern mountain led Thorodd to anticipate a heavy shower. He instantly commanded the hay-workers to pile up in ricks the quantity which each had been engaged in turning to the wind. It was afterwards remembered that Thorgunna did not pile up her portion, but left it spread on the field. The cloud approached with great celerity, and sunk so heavily around the farm that it was scarce possible to see beyond the limits of the field. A heavy shower next descended; and so soon as the clouds broke away, and the sun shone forth, it was observed that it had rained blood. That which fell upon the ricks of the other laborers soon dried up; but what Thorgunna had wrought upon remained wet with gore. The unfortunate Hebridean, appalled at the omen, betook herself to her bed, and

was seized with a mortal illness. On the approach of death, she summoned Thorodd, her landlord, and intrusted to him the disposition of her property and effects. "Let my body," said she, "be transported to Skalholt; for my mind presages that in that place shall be founded the most distinguished church in this island. Let my golden ring be given to the priests who shall celebrate my obsequies; and do thou indemnify thyself for the funeral charges out of my remaining effects. To thy wife I bequeath my purple mantle, in order that, by this sacrifice to her avarice, I may secure the right of disposing of the rest of my effects at my own pleasure. But for my bed, with its coverings, hangings, and furniture, I entreat they may all be consigned to the flames. I do not desire this because I envy any one the possession of these things after my death, but because I wish those evils to be avoided which I plainly foresee will happen if my will be altered in the slightest particular." Thorodd promised faithfully to execute this extraordinary testament in the most pointed manner. Accordingly, so soon as Thorgunna was dead, her faithful executor prepared a pile for burning her splendid bed. Thurida entered, and learned with anger and astonishment the purpose of these preparations. To the remonstrances of her husband, she answered, that the menaces of future danger were only caused by Thorgunna's selfish envy, who did not wish any one should enjoy her treasures after her decease. Then, finding Thorodd insensible to argument, she had recourse to caresses and blandishments, and at length extorted permission to separate

from the rest of the bed-furniture the tapestried curtains and coverlet ; the rest was consigned to the flames, in obedience to the will of the testator. The body of Thorgunna, being wrapped in new linen, and placed in a coffin, was next to be transported, through the precipices and morasses of Iceland, to the distant district she had assigned for her place of sepulture. A remarkable incident occurred on the way. The transporters of the body arrived at evening late, weary, and drenched with rain, in a house called Nether-Ness, where the niggard hospitality of the proprietor only afforded them house-room, without any supply of food or fuel. But, so soon as they entered, an unwonted noise was heard in the kitchen of the mansion, and the figure of a woman, soon recognized to be the deceased Thorgunna, was seen busily employed in preparing victuals. Their inhospitable landlord, being made acquainted with this frightful circumstance, readily agreed to supply every refreshment that was necessary ; on which the vision instantly disappeared. The apparition having become public, they had no reason to ask twice for hospitality, as they proceeded on their journey, and arrived safely at Skalholt, where Thorgunna, with all due ceremonies of religion, was deposited quietly in the grave. But the consequences of the breach of her testament were felt severely at Froda.

On the night when the conductors of Thorgunna's funeral returned to Froda, there appeared, visible to all who were present, a meteor, or spectral appearance resembling a half-moon, which glided around the boarded walls of the mansion in an opposite di-

rection to the course of the sun, and continued to perform its revolutions until the domestics retired to rest. This apparition was renewed every night during a whole week, and was pronounced by Thorer to presage pestilence or mortality. Shortly after a herdsman showed signs of mental alienation, and gave various indications of having sustained the persecutions of evil demons. This man was found dead in his bed one morning ; and then commenced a scene of ghost-seeing unheard of in the annals of superstition. The first victim was Thorer, who had presaged the calamity. Going out of doors one evening, he was grappled by the spectre of the deceased shepherd as he attempted to re-enter the house. His wooden leg stood him in poor stead in such an encounter : he was hurled to the earth, and so fearfully beaten that he died in consequence of the bruises. Thorer was no sooner dead than his ghost associated itself to that of the herdsman, and joined him in pursuing and assaulting the inhabitants of Froda. Meantime an infectious disorder spread fast among them, and several of the bonds-men died one after the other. Strange portents were seen within doors. The meal was displaced and mingled, and the dried fish flung about in a most alarming manner, without any visible agent. At length, while the servants were forming their evening circle around the fire, a spectre, resembling the head of a seal-fish, was seen to emerge out of the pavement of the room, bending its round black eyes full upon the tapestried bed-curtains of Thorgunna. Some of the domestics ventured to strike at this fig-

ure ; but, far from giving way, it erected itself farther from the door, until Kiarten, who seemed to have a natural predominance over these supernatural prodigies, seizing a huge forge-hammer, struck the seal repeatedly on the head, and compelled it to disappear, forcing it down into the floor as if he had driven a stake into the earth. This prodigy was found to intimate a new calamity. Thorodd, the master of the family, had some time before set out on a voyage to bring home a cargo of dried fish ; but, in crossing the river Enna, the skiff was lost, and he perished with the servants who attended him. A solemn funeral feast was held at Froda, in memory of the deceased, when, to the astonishment of the guests, the apparition of Thorodd and his followers seemed to enter the apartment, dripping with water. Yet this vision excited less horror than might have been expected ; for the Icelanders, though nominally Christians, retained, among other pagan superstitions, a belief that the spectres of such drowned persons as had been favorably received by the goddess Rana were wont to show themselves at their funeral feast. They saw, therefore, with some composure, Thorodd and his dripping attendants plant themselves by the fire, from which all mortal guests retreated to make room for them. It was supposed that this apparition would not be renewed after the conclusion of the festival ; but so far were their hopes disappointed, that, so soon as the mourning guests had departed, the fires being lighted, Thorodd and his companions marched in on one side, drenched, as before, with water ; on the other entered Thorer, heading all

those who had died in the pestilence, and who appeared covered with dust.

Both parties seized the seats by the fire, while the half-frozen and terrified domestics spent the night with neither light nor warmth. The same phenomenon took place the next night, though the fires had been lighted in a separate house ; and at length Kiarten was obliged to compound matters with the spectres, by kindling a large fire for them in the principal apartment, and one for the family and domestics in a separate hut. This prodigy continued during the whole feast of Jol. Other portents also happened to appall this devoted family. The contagious disease again broke forth ; and, when any one fell a sacrifice to it, his spectre was sure to join the troop of persecutors, who had now almost full possession of the mansion of Froda. Thorgrima Galldrakinna, wife of Thorer, was one of these victims ; and, in short, of thirty servants belonging to the household, eighteen died, and five fled for fear of the apparitions, so that only seven remained in the service of Kiarten.

Kiarten had now recourse to the advice of his maternal Uncle Snorro ; in consequence of whose counsel, what will perhaps appear surprising to the reader, judicial measures were instituted against the spectres. A Christian priest was, however, associated with Thordo Kausa, son of Snorro, and with Kiarten, to superintend and sanctify the proceedings. The inhabitants were regularly summoned to attend upon the inquest, as in a cause between man and man ; and the assembly was constituted before the gate of

the mansion just as the spectres had assumed their wonted station by the fire. Kiarten boldly ventured to approach them ; and, snatching a brand from the fire, he commanded the tapestry belonging to Thor-gunna to be carried out of doors, set fire to it, and reduced it to ashes, with all the other ornaments of her bed which had been so inconsiderately preserved at the request of Thurida. A tribunal being then constituted, with the usual legal solemnities, a charge was preferred by Kiarten against Thorer with the wooden leg, by Thordo Kausa against Thorodd, and by others chosen as accusers against the individual spectres present ; accusing them of molesting the mansion, and introducing death and disease among its inhabitants. All the solemn rites of judicial procedure were observed on this singular occasion ; evidence was adduced, charges given, and the cause formally decided. It does not appear that the ghosts put themselves on their defence ; so that sentence of ejectment was pronounced against them individually, in due and legal form. When Thorer heard the judgment, he arose, and, saying, “ I have sat while it was lawful for me to do so,” left the apartment by the door opposite to that at which the judicial assembly was constituted. Each of the spectres, as they heard their individual sentence, left the place, saying something which indicated their unwillingness to depart, until Thorodd himself was solemnly appointed to depart. “ We have here no longer,” said he, “ a peaceful dwelling : therefore will we remove.” Kiarten then entered the hall with his followers, and the priest with holy

water; and celebration of a solemn mass completed the conquest over the goblins, which had been commenced by the power and authority of the Icelandic law.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mósfell. — The Ride from Reykjavik. — Yankee Doodle. — Beautiful Midnight-Scene. — Sontarek, or Son's Loss.

“OFF at last!” exclaimed the leader of a company, on a June morning, as their horses with a bound, and frisk of their bushy tails, started from Reykjavik, for Mosfell and the north of Iceland.

One smiles at the mention of Icelandic *roads*, as he looks along the narrow, rough, and crooked pathway. The very track every spring-thaw washes out; and it can be found again only by the *bärthur*, which are turf-heaps, or blocks of basalt, laid upon each other on the top of rocks; or by *kerlinger*, which are pyramids of stone. These paths are generally *paved*, but very much as the streets of a city would be, if the stones were left as they were “dumped” from the cart. The ponies scramble over the sharp pavements of lava, where a man could scarcely pick his way. In this party was an American, who sang with a will “Yankee Doodle,” ringing out from the general schoolboy jollity. Soon the way was pathless, and beneath high bluffs, under whose shadow the wild duck was rocking on the crisp waves of the fiord; lava ridges were covered with ravens; a hot spring was smoking at their base;

then greets the eye a byre, whose grass-plat was sprinkled with golden cups.

Farther on for a few miles, over a river-traversed waste of bogs, and the spire of the old church of Mosfell burst on the sight, with its parsonage near.

Mosfell, pronounced Mōsfel, is a several-hours' ride from the capital, in a north-easterly direction. The day waned, and on the turf rose the tents in the stillness of an arctic midnight. “The sky was flooded with light, toning the azure to the tenderest green. Clouds were transmuted to rose-flakes, and mist to a nebulous haze of flame; some ragged cloud patches, high above the mountain peaks, flamed like gold in the furnace, their shadows picked out with carmine. A crown of rays, extending to the zenith, streamed from behind Esjá, which was thrown into gray shadow. Rock and mountain were distinct, as though seen through an opera-glass; every crag and furrow was pencilled with wondrous minuteness, each mountain-top cutting against the sky with intense precision. Though no direct rays of sun touched the earth, yet the reflected light from above made every thing even clearer than by day, when a slight haze softens outlines, and blends colors.

“The most perfect stillness reigned, only broken by the rippling of the stream over a bank of pebbles, before it hushed its murmurs in the bogs.”

Connected with Mosfell, is a beautiful story from the Aigla Saga. The hero of it fought King Athelstan of Scotland, and slew Bloodaxe of Norway.

SONARTORREK, OR THE SON'S LOSS.

(A.D. 975.)

On a day in the summer of 975, five house-churls, belonging to Egill Skallagrimsson, rowed to a merchant-vessel stationed in the Borgar Fjord, at the mouth of the Hvitá, or White River. With them was Böthvar, a son of Egill.

The boat started at high tide, which was in the evening, and remained alongside of the ship for a considerable time, whilst divers articles purchased by Egill were handed down the side, and deposited in her.

During the time that the churls were thus employed, a fierce wind had risen, and now rolled the sea before it in tumultuous billows, which, meeting the out-current of the river, after turn of tide, formed eddies which engulfed the boat on her return, and every soul on board perished.

Next morning the bodies were washed in the fjord; that of Böthvar by Einar's-ness, the others along the southern strand; and the boat was found on the beach under the Smoking-crags. On the same day Egill heard the news. He mounted his horse, and rode in search of the corpses; that of his son he found lying uninjured on the shingle, laced round with sea-tangles. He lifted it on his knee, brushed the sodden hair from the young face, placed it in front of his saddle, mounted himself, and rode with the body of his son wrapped in his arms to Digranes, where stood the cairn of his father Skallagrim. Egill fetched a spade, and dug

into the mound : he was occupied the whole of the afternoon at this work ; and in the evening he had reached the wooden chamber wherein lay the ancient warrior, busked for the last battle at the "Twilight of the Gods," with casque about his brows, and sword between his hands. Egill bore the corpse of his child into the tomb, and laid it by that of the grandfather, then filled up the pit he had dug, and restored the cairn to its former condition. After this he rode home ; and, without uttering a word, went into the chamber where he was wont to sleep, bolted the door behind him, and lay down on the bed.

His face was so stern and grave, as he entered the house, that no one ventured to address him.

The old man had gone out in the morning, dressed in a scarlet fustian tunic, tight-fitting about the body, and fastened with wrought silver buckles at the sides ; he had also worn closely fitting hose. On his return, the farm servants noticed that the kirtle was torn down the back, and the hose split, by the working of his muscles when he dug into the tomb.

Hours passed, and Egill did not open the door : he took neither meat nor drink, and so he lay, both day and night. Folk walked softly through the house, and the wife listened anxiously on the threshold ; but the old man neither spoke nor moved. So passed a second day, yet no one dared to interfere with the master in his grief.

On the third morning, as the day broke, Asgerthr, the good wife of Egill, ordered one of the freedmen

to mount his horse, and ride, as swiftly as possible, west away to Hjartharholt, and tell her daughter Thorgerthr what had taken place, and ask her advice as to what course had better be pursued.

The messenger reached Hjartharholt by noon, and related all that had happened. Thereupon Thorgerthr let a horse be saddled for her, ordered two servants to ride with her, and before sundown was at the house of her parents.

She dismounted at the door, and stepped quietly into the kitchen, where she found her mother. They embraced affectionately; and the daughter, as she kissed Asgerthr, felt that her cheeks were wet with tears.

“My dear,” said the housewife, “tell me whether you have eaten your supper; for, if not, I will order food to be brought you immediately.”

“Mother-mine!” answered Thorgerthr, in a voice loud enough to be heard throughout the house, “I have tasted nothing, neither do I intend touching food till I reach the halls of Freyja. I can do nothing better than follow my father’s example, and accompany him and my brother on the long last journey.”

Then she stepped to the threshold, and called, “Father, father! open the door. I wish that you and I should travel the same road together.”

All within was silent for a space; but presently she heard the old man’s step coming to the door, the bolt was drawn back, and Egill, pale and haggard, stood before her. She passed him without saying a word; then he again bolted the door, and returned with a

moan to his bed, but kept his eye fixed inquiringly on his daughter's countenance.

She lay down in another bed which was in the room, saying, "May we soon sup with the gods, father!"

Egill answered, "You act rightly, daughter, in choosing to follow your aged father. Great love do you show in thus joining your lot with mine. Who could think that I should care to live, bowed down beneath the burden of my great and bitter sorrow?"

Then both for a while were silent.

There was a small circular opening in the wall opposite the old man's couch, and through it the evening sun sent an orange spot upon the floor.

Not a sound in the room but the breathing of father and daughter; yet, from without, sounds of life were borne in upon the summer air. The river, at no great distance, rushed monotonously, yet with a pleasant murmur, over its pebbly floor; far off, up the mountain side, a flock of sheep were being driven to fold, and the barking of the dogs was distinctly audible in the little chamber; presently a flock of swans passed, with their strange musical scream; and, now and then, the whinny of a horse reached the ears of those who had laid themselves down to die.

Suddenly Egill spoke: "Daughter, I hear you munching something."

"So I am, father. It is *söl*" (*Alga saccharina*), she replied. "I think that it will do me harm: without something of the kind, I might live too long."

"Does it really shorten life?" asked Egill.

“Oh, that it does! Will you have some?”

“I see no reason against it,” answered he.

Then she rose from the bed, stepped over to him, and gave him some of the sea-weed.

As the plant is saturated with brine, both she and her father soon became exceedingly thirsty. They lay still, however, for some time, without either speaking. The sweet air of summer blew in at the little window, fresh as from the gates of Paradise. Without, the churls were making hay; and occasionally a few grass-blades were borne into the room by the draught. One of the thralls whetted his sickle; a girl at the farther extremity of the tún began a song. Within, the golden spot reached Egill’s bed-board, and began to slide up it. A mouse stole from behind a chest, and stood on the floor, looking round with bright, beady eyes, then darted under one of the beds.

The thirst of the daughter became at last so intolerable, that she rose, saying that she must taste one drop of water. Her father raised no objection: so she stepped to the door, opened it, and called for water. Her mother came up, and, as the girl bent to kiss her, she whispered a word into Asgerthr’s ear. Directly a large, silver-mounted drinking-horn was brought. Thorgerthr closed the door again, and bolted it, took a slender draught, and offered the horn to her father.

“Certainly,” said he: “that weed has parched my throat with thirst.” So he lifted the horn with both hands, and took a long pull.

“Father,” said Thorgerthr, “we have both been

deceived; we have been drinking milk, not water.” As she spoke, the old man clinched his teeth on the horn, and tore a great shred from it; then flung the vessel wrathfully to the ground.

“What is to be done now, father?” asked the daughter. “This our scheme has broken down at a very early stage, and we can no longer think of continuing it. I have a better plan to propose. Let us live sufficiently long for you to compose a beautiful elegy on your son Böthvar, and for me to carve it in runes on oaken staves; after which we can die, if the fancy takes us. I do not think my brother Thorstein quite the man to make much of a poem on our poor Böthvar; and it would be a disgrace to the family that the gallant boy should remain uncom memorated in song. As soon as your elegy is complete, we will hold a funeral banquet, at which you shall recite it. Now, what think you of my plan, dear father?”

Egill replied that the spirit of song was gone from him, but that he would try his best. Then he sat up in his bed, and chanted the following lay; composing at first with difficulty, till the fire of poetry kindled in his soul as brightly as it had burned in the days of youth; and the spot of flame from the setting sun, which had been running up the wall, rested on and glorified the old man’s inspired countenance. His voice, faltering at first, waxed strong and clear, so that it filled the house. This free translation, by Baring-Gould, was his song:—

“I tune my tongue but feebly
 To stir the air with song ;
 From heavy heart but hardly
 I drag the load of wrong.

From frozen brair but thinly
 The soft, sweet metres thaw ;
 From mines of grief but dully
 The golden dole I draw.

My race to death is drawing,
 As drop the forest-leaves ;
 As in the southland garners
 Are gathered golden sheaves.

Sad is the heart that singeth ;
 My sorrows rise and swell ;
 The lips but feebly mutter
 The bitter tale they tell.

A gap in heart’s affections ;
 For where’s my bonny boy ?
 The cruel sea hath torn in,
 And swept away all joy.

Rau bitterly has tried me :
 For friend on friend I grieve ;
 And now cold ocean shivers
 The bright chain I did weave.

The bright chain of my weaving !
 Oh, vengeance ! would ’twere mine !
 But how can these old sinews
 Resist the ruthless brine ?

Of much, too much, despoiled,
 An old man, sitting lone,
 With trembling fingers counting
 The gaps in dear old home.

Bereaved of his last treasure,
 The target of his race,
 Borne by the valkyrie
 Up to the Blissful Place.

Oh ! would my boy had oldened,
 To wield the bright blue blade ;
 And Odin's hand extended
 On his fair head been laid !

To father he — e'er faithful —
 Held when all else were cold ;
 The son's warm pulses quivered
 Through these thews waxing old.

Now through the long night-watches
 I restlessly am tossed :
 I cannot sleep for thinking
 Of all that I have lost.

Odin ! why hast thou riven
 The green bough from its stem,
 And ta'en it up to root it
 In homes of gods and men ?

Spear-shaker ! our old friendship
 I rend for aye away ;
 I trust thee now no longer,
 Fell leader of the fray !

Upon the grassy headland,
 Where father, children, sleep,
 Above the constant throbbing
 Of the ne'er quiet deep, —

Stands Death, calmly waiting :
 What ! can I dread to die ?
 Nay : gladly, oh ! how gladly,
 Towards her arms I fly ! ”

Now, it fell out, that, as Egill composed, his grief abated ; and, when the Lament was complete, he rose from his bed, and, entering the hall, seated himself on the high stool of honor. There all the house-folk gathered around him, and his wife and daughter sat at his feet. When a silence was made, he lifted his voice, and sang the poem ; and this Lament he named the Sonartorrek. Afterwards Egill waked his son in the ancient manner with much feasting ; and Thorgerthr returned home laden with rich presents her father had bestowed upon her.

When Egill left King Athelstan, he was presented with two chests of silver, which the patriarchal free-booter hid ; killing the slaves who had helped him bury them, practically applying the proverb, “ Dead men tell no tales.” For aught anybody knows, the treasure lies to this day beneath some of the bogs, near which Anglo-Saxon coins have been found.

CHAPTER XVII.

Grettir, the Hero and Outlaw of Iceland. — His Birthplace. — On the Sea. — The Red Rovers.

IT is summer-time ; and the green lawn of the ancient tún of Bijarg, with its red-gabled house of wood and turf, is covered with buttercups. Before it flows a rapid stream ; beyond which, on the north, rise between it and the middle frith rugged heights and white-capped jokulls ; southward, savage deserts and summits again spread away to the horizon. Here, at the close of the tenth century, was born Grettir, the famous hero and outlaw of Iceland. Little is known of his eventful life in this wild home of his boyhood, excepting that from it he went forth upon his tragical exploits and lonely wanderings. He mounted here his steed for yonder gloomy hills, to hunt and slay the murderer of Atli, his brother. He often sought the shore of the sounding sea, and gazed wonderingly upon the blue expanse, which he knew broke upon the beach of far-off fatherland. The day-dream of that unseen realm became a purpose to look upon its mountains and valleys. Watching for the coveted opportunity, he at last found a vessel bound for Norway. Terms were soon made with the master of the galley ; and Grettir, with wildest joy,

saw his native summits sink behind the “wide, wide sea.” The daring adventures of the young sea-rover are recorded at length in the Sagas. In the sketches of his career, there are imaginary scenes, growing out of the prevailing superstitions, or a desire to conceal by fiction unpleasant facts from the public. Among these myths, are manifestly some of the unearthly incidents in the “Vampyre’s Grave.” But the annals of his lawless life are mainly real history.

The stirring tales that follow are from the *Gretla Saga*.

THE RED ROVERS.

(A.D. 1012.)

One morning, after a night of storm on the coast of Norway, the servants ran into the hall of a wealthy bonder, named Thorfin, to inform him, that, during the night, a ship had been wrecked off the coast, and that the crew and passengers were congregated on a neighboring sandy holm, signalling for help. Up started the bonder, and hastened to the strand: he ran out a large punt from his boat-house, and, jumping in with his thralls, rowed lustily to the rescue. The shipwrecked people belonged to a merchant-vessel from Iceland, which had been driven among the breakers during the darkness, and had gone to pieces, yet not before a portion of the lading had been brought ashore.

Among the shivering beings gathered on the sand strip was Grettir, the son of an Icelandic chief who lived at Bjarg in the middle frith; he was then

a young man, tall and muscular, with large blue eyes, bushy hair, and a freckled face.

Thorfin received the half-frozen wretches on board his boat, and rowed them to the mainland, after which he returned to the holm, and brought off the wares. In the mean time, the good housewife had been lighting fires, preparing beds, routing out dry suits, and making hot ale, ready for the sufferers ; and right kindly they were treated, you may be sure.

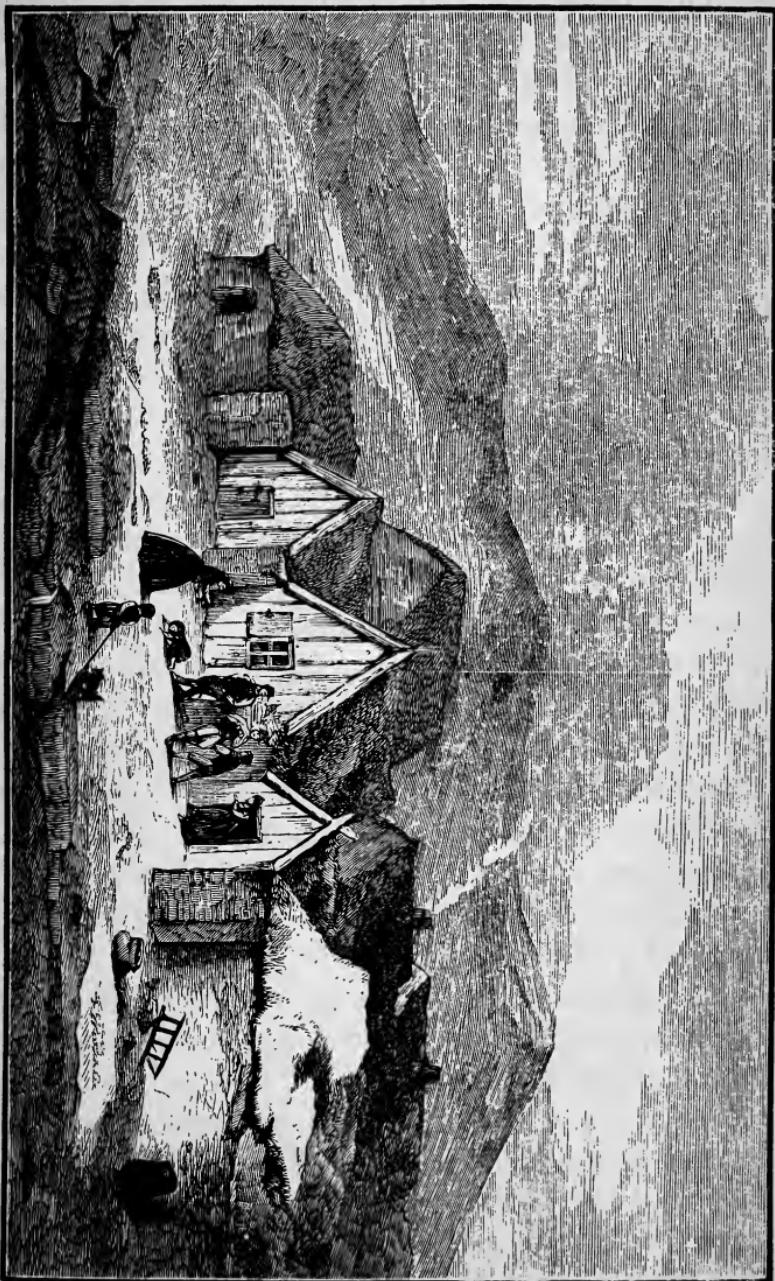
Well, the chapmen stayed a week at the farm, whilst their goods were being dried, and till the women of the party were sufficiently recovered from cold and exposure, to continue their journey to Drontheim, whither the whole party were bound ; after which they left Thorfin, with many thanks for his courtesy and kindness. Grettir, however, remained, not at the request of the bonder, who did not much like him, but to suit his own convenience. Indeed, he staid somewhat longer than Thorfin cared to keep him, considering what a fellow Grettir was, never joining in conversation, unwilling to lend a helping hand in any work, a great stay-at-home, crouching over the fire all day, and, withal, eating voraciously. Thorfin was much out of doors ; and, as he was a sociable man, he often requested Grettir to accompany him, either into the forest, or about his farm, but could get no further answer than an impatient shake of the head, and a grunt. Now, the bonder was a fellow with a right merry heart, and a kind one, and one, too, that loved seeing all around cheerful. With such a disposition, it is no wonder that the morose and indolent Grettir found no favor.

Yule drew nigh, and Thorfin busked him to depart, with a number of his freedmen, to keep high festival at one of his farms, distant a good day's journey. His wife was unable to accompany him, as the eldest daughter was ill, and wanted careful nursing ; and Grettir was not invited, as his sullenness would have acted as a damper to the joviality of the banquet.

The farmer started for his farm in Slysfjord some days before Yule, accompanied by his thirty freedmen, expecting to meet a goodly throng of guests, whom he had invited from all quarters.

Norway had for some time been in a disordered condition, from the mischief caused by numerous Berserkers and corsairs, who roved over the country, challenging bonders to mortal combat for their homes, their wives, and families. If a bonder declined to fight, as the law stood, his all was forfeited to the challenger ; and if he fought, and was worsted, he lost his life as well. With the advice of Thorfin, Earl Erik Hakon's son put down these holm-bouts, and outlawed those whose custom it had been to make a business of them, going round the country, and riding rough-shod over the peaceful bonders.

Among the worst of these, were two brothers, well known for their wickedness, Thorir wi' the Paunch, and Bad Ogmund. They were said to be stronger built than most, and to care for no man under the sun. They robbed wherever they went, burned farms over the heads of the sleeping inmates, and with the points of their spears drove the shrieking wretches back into the flames. When these pirates wrought themselves up into their Berserker rages,



EXTERIOR OF ICELANDER'S HOME, BJARG. -- Page 133.



they howled like wolves, foamed at the mouth, their strength was increased to that of Trolls, and they rushed about, demon-possessed, murdering and destroying every living being that came in their way. Thorfin had been the prime instigator of their outlawry through the length and breadth of Norway ; and, as may well be conjectured, the brothers bore him no good-will, and only waited for an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance upon him.

The eve of Yule was bright and sunny ; and the sick girl was so far recovered as to walk out and take the air, leaning on her mother's arm.

Grettir spent the whole day out of doors, in none of the sweetest of tempers, at being excluded from the festivities of the season, and left to keep house with the women and eight dunderheaded churls. He fed his discontent by sitting on a headland, watching the boats glide past, as parties went to convivial gatherings at the houses of their friends. The deep blue sea was speckled with white sails, as though countless gulls were playing on the waters. Now a stately dragon-ship rolled past, her fearful carved head glittering with gold and color, her sails spread like wings before the breeze, and her banks of oars flashing in the sun, then dipping into the sea ; now a wherry rowed by, laden with cakes and ale, and the boatmen's song rang merrily through the crisp air.

The day began to draw in ; but still the red sparks from little vessels, fleeting by in the dusk, showed that all the guests had not yet reached their destination.

Grettir was on the point of returning to the farm, when the strange proceedings of a craft at no great distance attracted his attention. He noticed that she stole along in the shadows of the islets, and darted with velocity across the open-water straits between them ; she hugged the shore wherever she could, moved in a zigzag course, and suddenly came flying with quick oar-sweeps towards the bay which Grettir was overlooking. In the twilight he could make out thus much of her, that she floated low in the water, that she was built for speed, and that her sides were hung with shields. As she stranded, the rowers jumped on the beach. Grettir counted them, and found that they were twelve, armed men too ! They broke into Thorfin's boat-house, and dragged forth his great punt, in which thirty men were wont to sit, pushed it out into deep water, and drew their own boat under cover, and pulled her up on the rollers.

Mischief was a-brewing, that was plain as a pike-staff ! So Grettir descended the hill, and sauntered up to the band, with his hands in his pockets, kicking the pebbles before him, and humming a tune with the utmost nonchalance. " May I ask who is the leader of this party ? " quoth he.

" Ah, ah ! I'm the man," responded as ill-looking a fellow as Nature could well turn out of her laboratory. " Why, I am Thorir wi' the Paunch, and here's my brother Ögmund with all his rascals. I reckon the Bonder Thorfin knows our names. Don't you think so, brother ? And we have a little account to settle with him. Pray, is he at home ? "

“Upon my word, you are lucky fellows,” spoke Grettir; “coming here in the very nick of time, if you are the men I take you for. The bonder is from home, with all his freedmen, and won’t be back till after Yule; his wife and daughter, however, are at the farm. Now’s your time, if you have old scores to wipe off; for there is every thing you can possibly want at the house,—silver, good clothes, ale, and provisions, in the greatest profusion.”

Thorir held his tongue whilst Grettir talked: afterwards he turned to his brother Ögmund, and said, “This is just what I expected, is it not? Now we can serve Thorfin out in thorough earnest for having made us outlaws. What a chatterbox this fellow is! There’s no need of pumping to get any thing one wants to know out of him.”

“Every man is master of his own tongue,” retorted Grettir. “Now come along with me, and I will do the best I can for you.”

The rovers thanked him, and accepted the invitation: so Grettir, taking Thorir by the hand, led him towards the farm, talking the whole way as hard as his tongue could wag. The housewife happened at the moment to be in the hall, putting up the hangings, and preparing for the Yule banquet; and, hearing Grettir speaking with much volubility, she stood still in astonishment, and asked whom he was greeting so cordially.

“It is quite the correct thing to receive guests well; is it not, mother?” asked Grettir; “and here are Thorir o’ the Paunch, Bad Ögmund, and ten others, who have kindly come to join us in our Yule

carousal ; which is delightful, for without them our party would have been wofully scanty.”

“ O Grettir! what have you done ! ” cried the poor woman. “ You have brought hither the greatest ruffians in Norway. I would have given any thing that they had never come. This is the way in which you return the good Thorfin has done you, in rescuing you from shipwreck, in taking you into his house, and caring for you through the winter, as though you were one of his freedmen ; and when you had not a farthing in your pocket to bless yourself withal ! ”

“ Stop this abuse ! ” growled the young man. “ There’s time enough for that sort of thing another day. Now come, and take off the wet clothes from the guests.”

“ You need not scream before you are hurt, my good woman,” quoth Thorir : “ you will want all your words for to-morrow, when I shall carry you and your daughter away with me, and you will have to say good-by to home for many a day. What think you of that ? ”

“ Capital ! ” roared Grettir. “ That is capital.”

On hearing this, the housewife and her daughter fled to the women’s apartment, crying, and wringing their hands with despair.

“ Well,” said Grettir, “ as the women won’t attend on you, I suppose that I must ; so be good enough to hand me over any thing you want to have dried, such as your wet clothes and weapons.”

“ You’re different from every one else in the house,” spoke Thorir. “ I almost think that you would make a boon companion.”

“As you please,” answered the young man. “Only, I tell you I don’t behave like this to all folk.”

Then the freebooters gave him up their weapons : he wiped the salt water from them, and laid them aside in a warm, dry spot. Next he removed their wet garments, and brought them dry suits, which he routed out of the clothes-chests belonging to Thorfin and his freedmen.

By this time it was quite night. Grettir brought in logs, raked up the fire, and made a noble blaze.

“Now, my men,” quoth he, “sit at table, and drink ; for, i’ faith, you must be thirsty after all the rowing you have done in the day.”

“We are ready,” said they ; “only we don’t know where to find the cellars.”

“Will you let me fetch ale for you, or will you help yourselves ?”

“Oh, go after it yourself, by all means !” answered they.

So Grettir brought the strongest ale, and poured out for them. The fellows were very tired, and drank copiously. Grettir stinted them neither in meat nor in drink ; and at last he sat down at the end of the table, and recited merry Sagas, which riveted their attention, and delighted them amazingly. First he told the history of Hromund Greipsson, how he broke open the tomb of old Viking Thrain, and descended into it ; how he wrestled with the demon-possessed corpse in its vault, and bore off its sword like sunbeam ; and how, in after years, Hromund fought on the ice, and received fourteen wounds, lost

his eight brothers, and, worst of all, saw his bright-flashing sword sink through an ice-floe. After that, Grettir told the tale of An the Bow-brandisher, who would not turn his bow to enter the king's hall, but walked forward with it, though the horns stuck in the door-posts ; and the bow bent nearly double, but did not break.

Not one of the house-churls showed his face in the hall that evening : they slunk about the farm frightened and trembling.

Quoth Thorir, “I'll tell you what, comrades ! This lad is one of the best fellows I've clapped eyes on. I don't think we could meet in a hurry with another who would wait on us so well. What shall we give him ? Come, man, ask a boon of us !” Grettir answered, “I demand only one thing,—that, if we are as great allies in the morning as we seem to be to-night, I may become one of your gang : even if I be weaker than the rest of you, be assured I will not hang back in the day of trial.”

The pirates were delighted with this proposal, and wanted to clinch brotherhood at once ; but Grettir objected. “No, no !” said he. “When liquor is in, wits leak out : you may come to a different mind in the morning when you are sober, and regret what you have done. There is no need of hurry ; and, as we are none of us famous for our discretion, a little thinking the matter over first is advisable.”

They all protested that they would not change their opinion of him in the morning. Grettir, however, remained firm in his decision.

The young man saw now that they were getting

rather tipsy, so he suggested that it was time for bed. "Yet first," said he, "you will, I know, like to run your eyes over Thorfin's storehouse."

"That we shall!" exclaimed Thorir, jumping up. "Come along, my lads, follow me!"

Grettir took a lamp, and led the way.

The storehouse was separate from the house, and stood at right angles to it. It was a strongly built place, made of large logs mortised firmly together: the door was also remarkably massive, and was furnished with a strong fastening. Adjoining this building was a lean-to office, divided off from the storehouse by a partition of planks. A flight of steps led to the office-door, for the house stood on a breast-high stone foundation.

The sharp, frosty air of night, striking on the faces of the revellers, increased their intoxication; and they became very disorderly, running against each other, uttering discordant whoops, and jolting Grettir's arm, so that he could with difficulty prevent the lamp from being knocked from his hand and extinguished.

Drawing back the bolt, he flung the door open, and showed the twelve men into the house. Then, sling-ing the lamp to a hook in one of the rafters, he let the rovers scramble for the prizes. The store was filled with various household goods, piles of costly garments, enamelled baldrics, carved and silver-mounted drinking-horns, some choice bracelets, and several bags, each containing a hundred ounces of pure silver. The drunken men were soon engaged in violent altercation over the spoil, as several coveted

the same articles. In the midst of the hubbub, Grettir stepped outside, closed the door, and bolted it. The freebooters did not notice his escape, as he had left the lamp burning, and they supposed that the door had swung to in the wind: they were, moreover, too intent on selecting their shares of the booty to think of any thing else.

Grettir flew across the homestead to the farm-door, and cried loudly for the housewife; but she was silent, as she very naturally mistrusted his intentions, and had besides secreted herself, from fear of the pirates.

“Come, answer!” shouted Grettir: “I have captured the whole twelve, and all that is wanting is a supply of weapons. Call up the thralls, and arm them; quick! there is not a moment to be lost.”

“There are weapons enough here,” answered the poor woman, emerging from her hiding-place. “But, Grettir, I have no faith in you.”

“Faith or no faith,” exclaimed Grettir, “I must have weapons at once. Where are the churls? Here, Kolbein! Svein! Gamlí! Hrolf! Confound the rascals! where have they skulked to?”

“It will be a mercy of God if any thing can be done!” said the housewife; “for we are in a sorry plight, to be sure. Now, look here. Over Thorfin’s bed hangs an enormous barbed spear. You will find there also helmet and cuirass, also a beautiful cutlass. No lack of weapons, if you have only the pluck to use them.”

Grettir seized the casque and spear, girded on the sword, and dashed into the yard, begging the woman

to send the churls after him. She called the eight men, and bade them arm at once, and follow. Four of them obeyed, rushing to the weapons, and scrambling for them, but the other four ran clean away.

I must tell you, that in the mean time the Berserkers had rather wondered at Grettir's disappearance, and from wondering had fallen to suspecting that all was not right. Then they sprang to the door, tried it, and found it locked from without. It was too massive for them to break open: so they tore down the partition of boards between the store and the office. The Berserker rage came on them, and they ground their teeth, frothed at the mouth, and burst forth with the howl of demoniacs through the office-door, upon the landing at the head of the steps, just as Grettir came to the foot.

Thorir and Ogmund were together. In the fitful gleams of the moon, they seemed like fiends, as they scrambled forth armed with splinters of deal, their eyes glaring with frenzy, and great foam-flakes bespattering their breasts, and dropping on the stones at their feet. The brothers plunged down the narrow stair with a yell which rang through the still, snow-clad forest for miles. Grettir planted the spear in the ground, and caught Thorir on its point. The sharp double-edged blade, three feet in length, sliced into him, and came out beneath his shoulders, then tore into Ogmund's breast a span deep. The yew shaft bent like a bow, and flipped from the ground the stone against which the butt had been planted. The wretched men crashed to the bottom

of the stair, tried to rise, staggered, and fell again. Grettir planted his feet on them, and wrenched the blade from their wounds, drew the cutlass, and smote down another rover as he broke through the door. Other Berserkers poured out; and Grettir drove at them with spear, or hewed at them with sword: he slew another as the churls came up. They were late, for they had been squabbling over the weapons; and now that they were come they were nearly useless, as they only made onslaughts when the backs of the robbers were towards them, but, the moment that the vikings turned on them, they bounded away, and skulked behind the walls.

The pirates showed desperate fight, armed with chips of plank, or sticks pulled from some pine-fagots which lay in the homestead. They warded off Grettir's blows, and fled from corner to corner, pursued by their indefatigable foe. In the wildness and agony of despair, they could not find the gate, but bounded over the wall of the yard, and ran towards the boat-house with Grettir at their heels. They plunged in, and possessed themselves of the oars; Grettir followed into the gloom, and smote right and left. The bewildered wretches climbed into the boat: some strove to push her into the water, whilst others battled in the darkness with their unseen enemy; but some pulled one way, some another, and the blows from the oars fell on friend as well as foe, so that the panic became more complete.

In the mean time the thralls had quietly returned to the farm, quite satisfied when they saw the robbers take to their heels; and no entreaties of the house-

wife could induce them to follow Grettir; the four churls had had quite enough of fighting; true, they had killed no one, but then they had seen some men killed. Grettir sprang into the boat, and stepped from bench to bench, driving aft the terrified vikings. As the boat-house was open to the air on the side which faced the sea, whilst the farther end was closed with a door, Grettir was in shadow, whilst the black figures of the rovers cut sharply against the moonlight, so that he could see where to strike, whilst his own body was undistinguishable.

One stroke from an oar reached him on the shoulder, and for the moment paralyzed his left arm. He killed two more vikings, and then the remaining four burst forth, and, separating into pairs, fled in different directions. Grettir followed the couple which was nearest, and tracked them to a neighboring farm, where they dashed into a granary, and hid among the straw. Unfortunately for them, most of the wheat had been threshed out, so that only a few bundles remained. Grettir shut and bolted the door behind him, then chased the poor wretches like rats from corner to corner, till he had cut them both down. Then he pulled the corpses to the door, and cast them outside.

In the mean while the sky had become overcast with a thick snow-fog which rolled up from the sea; so that Grettir, on coming out, saw that it would be hopeless attempting to pursue the two remaining Berserkers. Besides, his arm pained him, his strength was failing him, and there stole over him an overpowering sense of weariness after his protracted

exertions. The housewife had placed a lamp in the window of a loft; so that Grettir, seeing the light, was able to find his way back through the snow-storm without difficulty. When he came to the door, she met him, and, extending both her hands, gave him a cordial welcome. "You have indeed shown great valor!" quoth she: "you have saved me and my household from insult and ruin. To you, and you alone, are we indebted."

"I am not much altered from what I was last evening: yet you now sing quite a different strain; then you abused me most grossly," grumbled the young man.

"Ah! but we little knew your metal then. Come, be a welcome guest within, and tarry till my husband returns. Thanks are all that I can render you; but be assured Thorfin will not rest content till he has rewarded this deed of yours munificently."

Grettir replied that he cared little for a reward, but that he gladly availed himself of her invitation. "And now I hope you may sleep without much fear of Berserkers." Grettir drank little, but lay down fully armed for a sound and well-earned sleep.

On the following morning, as soon as day broke, a party was formed to search for the two remaining vikings who had escaped from Grettir in the darkness. The snow had fallen so thickly during the night that the ground was covered, and all traces were obliterated, so that the search proved ineffectual till dusk, when the men were discovered under a rock, dead from cold and loss of blood. The bodies were removed to the shore, and buried under a

cairn between tides.* Then all returned to the farm in high glee ; and Grettir chanted the following verse : —

“ Twelve war-flame branches are buried
Low by the loud resounding ;
Unasked, sent I them singly
To speedy death. O ye gold-sallous,
Well-born ! bear me all witness !
What is wrought mightier ? tell me,
If ye wot, — this being little.”

“ There are not many men like you, certainly,” answered the lady ; “ at all events, in this generation.”

Then she seated him on the high stool of honor, and treated him with every distinction.

So passed the time until the return of the bonder.

It was not till the Yule festivities were well over, that Thorfin busked him for return ; then, after having dismissed his guests with presents, he and his freedmen started for home, before news had reached him of what had taken place during his absence. The first startling circumstance was the appearance of his great punt, stranded. Thorfin bade his men row to land with all speed, as he suspected that this could not be the result of accident. The bonder was the first, in his anxiety, to leap ashore, and run to the boat-house. There he saw a ship hauled up on the rollers ; and, at the second glance, he knew it to be that of the vikings. His cry of dismay

* Burial between tides was looked upon as disgrace, being a contrast with that on consecrated ground.

brought the rest around him : he pointed to the vessel, and said, " The Red-rovers have made an attack on my farm. I would give house and lands that they had never come."

" What cause is there for fearing that a hostile visit has been paid ? " asked some of his men.

" I know whose boat this is," answered the farmer. " It belongs to Thorir o' the Paunch, and Bad Ogmund, the two wickedest and most brutal of all the Norwegian pirates. No effectual resistance can have been offered, I fear, as the farm was deserted by all fighting men, except, perhaps, that Icelander ; but I put no trust in him whatsoever."

The freedmen now consulted with the farmer as to what steps should be taken, supposing that the house was occupied by pirates.

All this while Grettir was at home, and he was to blame for leaving Thorfin in uncertainty and alarm. He had seen the master's boat round the headland, and enter the bay ; but he would neither go himself to meet him on the strand, nor suffer the thralls to do so.

" I do not care even though the bonder be a little distracted at what he sees," said the young man.

" Have you any objection to my going to the shore ? " asked the wife.

" None in the least : you are mistress of your own actions."

Then she, with her daughter, ran to meet her husband, and greeted him with a bright smile on her face. He was delighted at seeing her, and said, kissing her forehead, " God be praised, sweetheart, that

you and my child are safe and sound! But tell me how matters have stood during my absence; for, from the look of affairs, I do not think that you can have been left quite undisturbed."

"No more have we," she replied. "We have been in grievous danger of loss and dishonor; but the shipwrecked man, whom you have sheltered, has been our helper and guardian."

Thorfin said, "Sit by me on this rock, and tell me of what has taken place."

Then they took each other's hands, and sat together on a stone; the freedmen gathered around; and she told plainly and truthfully the story of the rovers, and Grettir's gallant conduct. When she spoke of the manner in which the young Icelander had decoyed them into the storehouse, and fastened them in, all the freedmen raised a shout of joy; and, when her tale was ended, their exultant cries rang so loud that Grettir heard them in the farmhouse.

Thorfin spoke no word to interrupt the thread of his wife's recital, but the workings of his heart were clearly legible on his countenance. After she had ceased, he sat still, wrapped in thought; no one ventured to disturb him. Presently he looked up, and said, "The old saying proves to be true, 'Despair of no man.' Where is Grettir?"

"At home," answered the wife. "He is a strange man, and would not come to meet you."

"Then let me go to him," said the farmer, rising, and walking towards the house, followed by his men.

When he saw Grettir, he sprang to him, and thanked him in the fairest words for the heroism he had displayed.

“ This I say to you,” spoke Thorfin, “ which few would say to their dearest friends, that I hope one day you may need support, so as to prove how earnestly and joyfully I will strain every nerve to assist you; for, assuredly, I never can repay you for what you have done in my behalf, till you are brought into great straits yourself. Abide with me as long as you list, and you shall be held in highest esteem by me and my followers.”

Grettir thanked him heartily, and spent the rest of the winter at his house. The story of his exploit was noised throughout Norway; and it was especially praised on the spots where the Berserkers had given any trouble.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sons of an Icelandic Chief in Norway.—Grettir stranded near their Winter Home.—He swims the Fiord.—Burning of the Hostel.—Grettir arrested.—The Trial by Burning Ploughshares.—Returns to Iceland.—His Mother.

IN the year A. D. 1016, a man named Thorir lived at Garth, in Athaldal. He was a mighty Icelandic chief, with numerous retainers, and extended influence. He had two sons, fine, promising fellows, both of them, and, at the time of my story, pretty nearly full-grown men. Thorir had spent the summer in Norway, when King Olaf returned from England, and had got into favor with the king, and also with Bishop Seginth; as may be judged by the fact that Thorir, after having built a ship, asked him to consecrate it, which was a great condescension on the part of Thorir.

Thorir left Norway for Iceland: he reached it safely, and then chopped up his boat, as he was tired of the sea. The two beaks of the prow he set up over his hall doors; and they were sure indications of the direction of the wind, for the north wind piped in one, and in the other wailed the south wind.

As soon as the news reached Iceland that King Olaf was supreme over the whole of Norway, Thorir considered that there might be a good opening at

court for his two sons ; so he packed them both off, late in the autumn, to pay their respects to the king, and remind him of his old friendship for their father.

They landed in the south of Norway ; and then, getting a long rowing-boat, they skirted the coast on their way north to Drontheim. Reaching a fine frith, in which there was shelter from the gales which began to bluster violently as the winter drew nigh, the sons of Thorir ran their boat in, and determined on waiting, till the storms blew over, in a comfortable hostel, built some way up the shore, for the accommodation of travellers. Their days they spent in hunting bears among the mountains, and their nights in merry carousal.

It happened that Grettir was on board a merchantman, then off the shores of Norway, beating about in the gale, seeking safe harborage.

Late one evening the vessel ran up this same fjord, and stranded on the side opposite that on which was the hostel. The night was cold and wintry ; heavy storms of snow rolled over the country, whitening the mountains, and forming drifts behind the rocks. The men from the ship were worn out and numbed with cold, and they knew not on what part of the coast they had stranded.

When they reached land, they hurried from the shore to seek a sheltered nook where they might pass the night.

It was a wild night. The moon had been clouded over by piles of gray mist, which rolled through the sky, sending out arms of vapor ; haggard and ghastly, she seemed to steal over her course swathed in grave-

clothes. Now and then some crags caught a straggling gleam, and flashed forth, but directly after were again blotted out; then the fjord caught the light, and shone like steel till the shadows turned it to lead. An uncertain light flickered down the mountain side over the pine-forests, which waved and bent as the wind poured through them.

Suddenly a spark, then a flame, was distinguishable, twinkling among the trees on the opposite side of the fjord. This was a tantalizing sight for the poor shivering fellows; and they began to wish that some one of their number would swim across, and bring over a light. No one, however, offered; and the crew hesitated about pushing the ship off and rowing across, lest they should fall among rocks, and injure the vessel.

“In the good old times there must have been some men who would have thought nothing of swimming across the frith by night,” said Grettir.

“Maybe,” answered some of the party; “but it is of no odds to us what men have been, if there are none now up to the mark. Why do you not venture yourself, Grettir? You are as strong and plucky as any of the old heroes. You see what straits we are put to for want of a little fire.”

“There is no great difficulty in procuring a light,” answered the young Icelander: “but I know that I shall get no thanks for my pains.”

“Then you must have an uncommonly poor opinion of us,” said the chapmen.

“Well,” quoth Grettir, “I will risk it: at the same time I tell you, I have a presentiment that you will bear me no good-will for what I do.”

They pooh-poohed his objections, and assured him that he was the best fellow going.

Then Grettir flung his clothes off, and busked him for swimming. He had on him a fur cape, and a pair of *wadmal* breeches. These he hitched up, and strapped tightly round his waist with a bark cord; then, catching up an iron pot, he jumped into the sea, and swam across.

On reaching the farther side, he stood up on the beach, and shook the superfluous water from him; but before long his trousers froze hard, and the water formed in icicles round the hood of his cape.

Grettir ascended through the pine wood towards the light; and, on reaching the hostel from whence it proceeded, he walked straight in without speaking to any one; and, striding up to the fire, he stooped, and began to rake the embers into his iron pot, and to select a blazing brand which he could carry across in his mouth.

The hall was full of revellers, and these revellers were the sons of Thorir, and their boat's crew. They were already half intoxicated; and on seeing a tall, wild-looking man enter the hall, half dressed in fur, and bristling with icicles, they concluded at once that they saw a troll, or mountain demon.

Whereupon, every man caught up the first weapon he could lay hold of, and rushed to the attack. Grettir defended himself as best he could, warding off the blows with the flaming log, and eluding the missiles flung at him. In the scuffle, the hot embers on the hearth were scattered over the floor, which was strewn with fresh straw and rushes.

In a few moments, the hall was filled with flame and smoke ; and Grettir broke through it, escaped to the shore, plunged into the waves, and reached the other side in safety.

He found his companions waiting for him behind a rock, with a pile of dry wood which they had collected during his absence. The cinders were blown upon, and twigs applied, till a blaze was produced ; and before long the whole party sat rubbing their almost frozen hands over a cheerful fire.

On the following morning the merchants recognized the fjord ; and, remembering that on its bank stood the house of refuge which King Olaf had built for weather-bound travellers, they supposed that the light Grettir had procured must have come from it ; so they determined on running the boat across, and seeing who were then quartered in the hostel.

When they reached the spot, they found nothing but an immense heap of smoking ashes. From under some of the charred timber, projected scorched human limbs. The chapmen, in alarm and horror, turned upon Grettir, and charged him with having maliciously burned the house with all its inmates.

“ There, now ! ” exclaimed Grettir : “ I had a presentiment that misfortune would attend my undertaking last night. I wish that I had not taken so much trouble for a set of thankless churls like you.”

The ship’s crew raked the embers out, and pulled aside the smoking beams in their search for the bodies, that they might give them decent burial. In so doing, they came upon some whose features

were not completely obliterated, and among these was one of the sons of Thorir. It was at once concluded that the party brought by Grettir to such an untimely end was that of Thorir's sons, which had sailed shortly before the chapmen. The indignation of the merchants became so vehement, that they drove Grettir with imprecations from their company, and refused to receive him into their vessel for the remainder of the voyage.

Grettir, in sullen wrath, would say no word in self-defence; but, turning on his heel, he stalked proudly into the woods with his sword by his side, and his battle-axe over his shoulder, determined on exculpating himself before King Olaf, and him alone. The vessel reached Drontheim before him, and the news of the hostel-burning caused universal indignation.

One day, as the king sat at audience in his hall, Grettir strode in, and, going before Olaf, greeted him. The king eyed him all over, and said, —

“Are you Grettir the strong?”

He answered, “Such is my name; and I have come hither, sire, to get a fair hearing, and rid myself of the charge of having burned men maliciously. Of that I am guiltless.”

Olaf replied, “I sincerely hope that what you say is true, and that you will have the good fortune to clear yourself of the imputation laid against you.”

Grettir said that he was willing to do any thing the king wished, in order to prove his innocence.

“Tell me first,” quoth the king, “what is the true version of the story, that I may know what steps are to be taken.”

Grettir answered by relating all the circumstances; and he asserted that the men were alive when he left the hostel, carrying the fire.

The king remained silent for some moments.

“If I might fight some one,” suggested Grettir, “I should rather like it.”

“I have no doubt that you would,” replied Olaf. “But remember you have not a single accuser, but a whole ship’s crew, and you cannot fight them all.”

“Why not?” asked the Icelander; “the more, the merrier. Let them come.”

“No, no, Grettir,” answered the king. “I cannot allow such a proceeding to take place. But I will tell you what you shall do: go through the fire ordeal.”

“What is that?” asked the young man.

“You must lift bars of iron, heated till the furnace can make them no hotter, and walk with bare feet on red-hot ploughshares.”

“I’ll do it at once,” said Grettir. “Where are the ploughshares?”

“Stop!” said the king. “You would be burned to a certainty if you ventured without preparation.”

“What preparation?” asked Grettir.

“A week of prayer and fasting,” was the reply.

“I do not like fasting,” said the young man.

“But you cannot help yourself,” answered Olaf.

“I cannot pray,” said Grettir: “I never could.”

“Then the bishop shall teach you,” answered the king, with a smile at the bluntness of the Icelander.

Grettir was removed, and kept in custody by the clergy, who did their best to prepare him for the solemn moment of the ordeal; but they found him a troublesome fellow to manage.

The day came; and Drontheim was thronged with people, who streamed in from all the country round, to see the Icelander of whom such stories were told. A procession was formed; the king's body-guard marched at the head, followed by the king himself, the bishop, the choir, and the clergy, amongst whom walked Grettir, a head taller than any of the throng, upright, his wild, brown hair flying loose in the breeze, his arms folded, and his honest blue eyes wandering over the sea of heads which filled the square before the cathedral doors. The crowd pressed in closer and closer, but without in the slightest degree disconcerting him. Opinions seemed to be divided as to whether he were guilty or not. His dauntless bearing, and open, sunny countenance, were not those of a truculent Berserker. Among the mob was a young man of dark complexion, who made a great noise, wrangling, and shouldering his way, till he reached the procession.

“Look at him!” exclaimed he. “This is the man who, in cold blood, could burn a house down over helpless victims, and exult at their shrieks of despair; yet now he is about to be given a chance of escape, when every one knows that he is a deep-dyed villain!”

“But he says that he is guiltless,” quoth a man in the crowd.

“Innocent!” exclaimed the youth. “A plea of

innocence has been set up as an excuse because the king wishes to have him in his body-guard."

"He should have a chance of clearing his character," spoke a person standing near.

"Ay! but who knows how the irons may be tampered with by the king and clergy, so that this ruthless murderer may escape the punishment he deserves?"

"Young man!" spoke Grettir, with a voice like thunder, whilst flame leaped up in his eyes, and his strong limbs quivered with rage. "Young man, beware!"

"Beware of what, pray?" laughed the youth. "Though you may escape the punishment you so richly deserved, yet you shall not escape me."

And, springing up, he thrust his nails into Grettir's face, so that he brought blood; calling him, at the same time, son of a sea-devil, troll, and other insulting names. This was more than the Icelander could bear: he caught the young man up, shook him as a cat shakes a mouse, and flung him to the ground with such violence that he lay senseless, and was carried away as if dead.

This act gave rise to a general uproar: the mob wanted to lay hands on Grettir; some threw stones, others assaulted with sticks; but he, planting his back against the church wall, rolled up his sleeves, and guarded off the blows, shouting joyously to his assailants to come on.

A shout of honest joy at the prospect of a fight mantled in his cheeks, and his eyes sparkled with delight. Not a man came within his reach but was sent reeling back, or felled to the ground.

Grettir caught a stick aimed at him, while it was in the air, and dealt such blows with it, that he cleared a ring about him ; whilst still, with a voice clear as a bell, he called to the mob to come on manfully, and not shrink back like cowards.

In the mean time the king and bishop had been waiting in church ; the processional psalm was ended, the red-hot ploughshares were laid in the choir, and were gradually cooling ; but no Grettir came.

At the same time sounds of uproar entered the church, and the king sent out to know what was the matter. His messenger returned a moment after with a report, that, without the cathedral, the Icelander was fighting the whole town.

The king thereupon sprang from his throne, hastened down the nave, and came out of the great western door whilst the conflict was at its height.

“ O sire ! ” exclaimed Grettir : “ see how I can fight the rascals ! ” and, at the word, he knocked a man over at the king’s feet.

“ Hold, hold ! ” exclaimed Olaf. “ What have you done, throwing away the chance of exculpating yourself from the charge laid against you ? ”

“ I am ready now, sire, ” answered Grettir, wiping the perspiration and blood from his face, and smoothing down his hair, which was standing on end. “ Let us go into the church at once : I am longing for the red-hot ploughshares.”

He would have pushed past the king, had not Olaf prevented him, saying that his opportunity was past, as he was guilty of mortal sin in having killed the young man who had assaulted him, and maimed so many other persons.

“What is to be done?” exclaimed Grettir. “I have undergone all that week of fasting for nothing. Sire, might not I become your henchman? You will find me stronger than most men.”

“True enough,” answered the king: “few men have the strength and courage which you possess; but ill-luck attends on you. Besides, I dare not keep you by me, as you would continually be getting into hot water. Now this I decree: you shall be in peace during the winter; but with the return of summer you shall be outlawed, and go to Iceland, where I forewarn you, you shall lay your bones.”

Grettir answered, “I should like first to get rid of the charge of the hostel-burning, for, honor bright! I never intended to do the mischief.”

“That is likely enough,” said the king; “but it is quite impossible now for you to go through the ordeal.”

After this, Grettir hung about the town for some while; but Olaf paid no further attention to him; so at last he went off to stay the rest of the winter with a kinsman.

On the return of spring, the news of what Grettir had done reached Iceland; and, when they came to the ears of Thorir of Garth, he rode with all his friends and clients to Thing, and brought an action against Grettir for the burning of his sons. Some men thought that the action was illegal, as the defendant was not present to take exception; however, the end of the action was, that Grettir was outlawed through the length and breadth of Iceland. Thorir set a price on his head, and proved the bitterest of Grettir’s foes.

Towards the close of the summer, Grettir arrived in a vessel off the mouth of the White River, in Borgar-fjord.

It was a still summer night when the ship dropped anchor. The Skarths-heithi chain was purple; but Baula's short cone was steeped in gold, and the distant silver cap of Ok shone in the sun's rays, like a rising moon. The steam rising from the numerous springs in Reykholt-dale was rounded and white in the cool, still air. Flights of swans sailed overhead with their harp-like melody. As the gulls dipped in the calm water, every feather of their white wings was reflected. A boat came from shore, and was rowed to the ship.

Grettir stood watching it from the bows, leaning on his sword. As the smack touched the side of the ship, "What news?" he called.

"Are you Grettir, Asmund's son?" asked a man rising in the boat.

"I am," replied Grettir.

"Then we bear you ill news: your father is dead!"

Another man stood up in the boat, and said, "Grettir, your brother has been murdered!"

"And you," called a third boatman, "have been outlawed through the length and breadth of Iceland!"

It is said that Grettir did not change color, nor did a muscle in his whole body quiver; but he lifted up his voice, and sang, —

"All at once are showered
Round me, rhyme-collector,
Tidings sad, — my exile,

Father's loss, and brother's,
Branching boughs of battle.
Many blue-blade breakers
Shall bewail my sorrow."

One night Grettir swam ashore, obtained a horse, and reached the Middle Frith in two days. He arrived at home by night, when all were asleep; so, instead of disturbing the household, he went round to the back of the house, opened a private door, stepped into the hall, stole up to his mother's bed, and threw his arms round her neck.

She started up, and asked who was there. When he told her, she clasped him to her heart, and laid her head, sobbing, on his breast, saying, "O my boy! I am bereaved of my children; Atli, my eldest, is murdered, and you are outlawed; only my baby Illugi remains!"

Grettir remained at home for some days, till Thorir of Garth learned where he was, and then he was compelled to fly. He was hunted from place to place, and to the last Thorir remained his implacable enemy.

CHAPTER XIX.

Haunted Sheepfolds. — Strange Shepherd. — His Fate. — Grettir succeeds Him. — Terrible Scenes. — Final Struggle. — The Vampire's Grave.

IN the beginning of the eleventh century, there stood, a little way up the Valley of Shadows, on the northern route from Thingvalla, a small farm occupied by a worthy bonder named Thorhall, and his wife. Thorhall would have been a happy man, but for one circumstance, — his sheep-walks were haunted.

Not a herdsman would remain with him. He bribed, threatened, entreated, all to no purpose: one shepherd after another left his service; and things came to such a pass, that he determined on asking advice at the next annual council.

Skapti, Thorodd's son, was lawgiver at that time; and as every one considered him a man of the utmost prudence, and able to give the best advice, our friend from the Vale of Shadows made straight for his booth, when the Althing met at Thingvalla.

“An awkward predicament, certainly, to have large droves of sheep, and no one to look after them,” said Skapti, nibbling the nail of his thumb, and shaking his wise head, — a head as stuffed with law as a ptarmigan's crop is stuffed with bla-

berries. "Now, I'll tell you what: as you have asked my advice, I will help you to a shepherd, a character in his way; a man of dull intellect, to be sure, but strong as a bull. He is called Glámr."

"I do not care about his wits, so long as he can look after sheep," answered Thorhall.

"You may rely on his being able to do that," said Skapti. "He is a stout, plucky fellow; a Swede from Sylgsdale, if you know where that is."

He rode away to Armaun's-fell; and, when he drew near, he met a strange-looking man driving before him a horse laden with fagots.

"Pray what is your name, my man?" asked the farmer, pulling up.

"Glámr, an please you!" replied the wood-cutter. Thorhall stared; then, with a preliminary cough, he asked how Glámr liked fagot-picking.

"Not much," was the answer: "I prefer shepherd life."

"Will you come with me?" asked Thorhall: "Skapti has handed you over to me, and I want a shepherd this winter uncommonly."

"If I serve you, it is with the understanding that I come and go as pleases me. I tell you I'm a bit truculent if things do not go just to my thinking."

"I shall not object to this," answered the bonder, "so I may count on your services."

"Wait a moment! You have not told me whether there be any drawback."

"I must acknowledge that there is one," said Thorhall; "in fact, the sheepwalks have got a bad name for bogies."

“Pshaw! I’m not the man to be scared at shadows,” laughed Glámr; “so here’s my hand to it: I’ll be with you at the beginning of the winter night.”

Well, after this, they parted, and presently the farmer found his ponies. Having thanked Skapti for his advice and assistance, he got his horses together, and trotted home. Summer, and then autumn, passed, but not a word about the new shepherd reached the Valley of Shadows.

One gusty night a violent blow at the door startled all the farm; in another moment, Glámr, tall as a troll, stood in the hall glowering out of his wild eyes, his gray hair matted with frost, his teeth rattling and snapping with cold, his face blood-red in the glare of the fire which smouldered in the centre of the hall.

Thorhall jumped up, and greeted him warmly; but the housewife was too frightened to be very cordial. Weeks passed, and the new shepherd was daily on the moors with his flocks; his loud and deep-toned voice was often borne down on the blast, as he shouted to the sheep, driving them into the fold.

His presence always produced gloom; and, if he spoke, it sent a thrill through the women, who openly proclaimed their aversion for him.

There was a church near the byre, but Glámr never crossed the threshold: he hated psalmody, which shows what a bad man he was.

A raw day came; masses of gray vapor rolled up from the Arctic Ocean, and hung in piles about the mountain-tops. As the day declined, snow began to

fall in large flakes, like the down of the eider-duck. One moment there was a lull in the wind ; and then the deep-toned shout of Glámr, high up the moor-slopes, was heard by the congregation assembling for the first vespers. Darkness came on, deep as that in the rayless abysses of Surtshellir, and still the snow fell thicker. The lights from the church-windows sent a yellow haze far out into the night, and every flake burned golden as it swept within the ray. The bell in the lych-gate clanged for even-song, and the wind puffed the sound far up the glen ; perhaps it reached the herdsman's ear. Hark ! some one caught a distant shout or shriek ; which it was he could not tell, for the wind muttered and mumbled about the church-eaves, and then, with a fierce whistle, scuddled over the graveyard fence.

Glámr had not returned when the service was over. Thorhall suggested a search, but no man could accompany him ; and no wonder ! it was not a night for a dog to be out in ; besides, the tracks were a foot deep in snow. The family sat up all night, waiting, listening, trembling ; but no Glámr came home. Dawn broke at last, wan and blear in the south. The clouds hung down like great sheets, full of snow, almost to bursting.

A party was soon formed to search for the missing man. Presently they were called together about a trampled spot in the heithi, where evidently a death-struggle had taken place, for earth and stone were tossed about, and the snow was blotched with large splashes of blood. A gory track led up the mountain ; and the farm-servants were following it, when a

cry, almost of agony, from one of the lads made them turn. In looking behind a rock, the boy had come upon the corpse of the shepherd. It was livid, and swollen to the size of a bullock; it lay on its back with the arms extended. The snow had been scabbled up by the puffed hands in the death agony; and the staring glassy eyes gazed out of the ashen-gray upturned face, into the vaporous canopy overhead. From the purple lips lolled the tongue, which in the last throes had been bitten through by the horrid white fangs; and a discolored stream which had flowed from it was now an icicle.

A cairn was raised over it on the spot.

Two nights after this, one of the thralls who had gone after the cows burst into the stofa with a face blank and scared; he staggered to a seat, and fainted. On recovering his senses, in a broken voice, he assured all who crowded about him that he had seen Glámr walking past him, as he left the door of the stable. On the following evening a house-boy was found in a fit under the tún wall; and he remained an idiot to his dying day. Some of the women next saw a face, which, though blown out and discolored, they recognized as that of Glámr looking in upon them through a window of the dairy. In the twilight Thorhall himself met the dead man, who stood and glowered at him, but made no attempt to injure his master. The haunting did not end there. Nightly a heavy tread was heard around the house, and a hand feeling along the walls, sometimes thrust in at the windows, at others clutching at the woodwork, and breaking it to splinters. However, when the

spring came round, the disturbances lessened ; and, as the sun obtained full power, ceased altogether.

That summer a vessel from Norway dropped anchor at Húnavatu. Thorhall visited it, and found on board a man named Thorgant, who was in search of work.

“What do you say to being my shepherd ?” asked the bonder.

“I should much like the office,” answered Thorgant. “I am as strong as two ordinary men, and a handy fellow, to boot.”

“I will not engage you without forewarning you of the terrible things you may have to encounter during the winter night.”

“Pray, what may they be ?”

“Ghosts and hobgoblins,” answered the farmer. “A fine dance they lead me, I assure you.”

“I fear them not,” answered Thorgant: “I shall be with you at cattle-slaughtering time.”

At the appointed season the man came, and soon established himself as a favorite in the household.

At last Christmas Eve came round, and Thorgant went out as usual with his sheep.

“Have a care, man !” urged the bonder. “Go not near to the gill-head where Glámr lies.”

“Tut, tut ! fear not for me: I shall be back by vespers.”

“God grant it !” sighed the housewife; “but 'tis a wisht day, to be sure.” The natives are waiting around the church-door, but no Thorgant has returned. They find him, next morning, lying across Glámr's cairn, with his spine, his leg, and arm-bones

shattered. He is conveyed to the churchyard, and a cross is set up at his head. He sleeps till the resurrection peacefully.

Not so Glámr: he becomes more furious than ever. No one will remain with Thorhall now except an old cowherd who has always served the family, and who had long ago dandled his present master on his knee.

“All the cattle will be lost if I leave,” said the carle. “It shall never be told that I deserted Thorhall from fear of a spectre.”

Grettir was in Iceland; and, as the hauntings of this vale were matter of gossip throughout the district, he heard of them, and resolved on visiting the scene. So Grettir busked himself for a cold ride, mounted his horse, and, in due course of time, drew rein at the door of Thorhall’s farm, with the request that he might be accommodated there for the night.

“Ahem!” coughed the bonder; “perhaps you are not aware”—

“I am perfectly aware of all. I want to catch sight of the troll.”

“But your horse is sure to be killed.”

“I will risk it. Glámr I must meet, so there’s an end of it.”

“I am delighted to see you,” spoke the bonder; “at the same time, should mischief befall you, don’t lay the blame at my door.”

“Never fear, man.”

So they shook hands; the horse was put into the strongest stable; Thorhall made Grettir as good cheer

as he was able, and then, as the visitor was sleepy, all retired to rest. The night passed quietly enough, and no sounds indicated the presence of a restless spirit. The horse, moreover, was found next morning in good condition, enjoying his hay.

"This is unexpected," exclaimed the bonder gaily. "Now where's the saddle? We'll clap it on, and then good-by, and a merry journey to you!"

"Good-by!" echoed Grettir: "I am going to stay here another night."

"You had better be advised," urged Thorhall. "If misfortune should overtake you, I know that all your kinsmen would visit it on my head."

"I have made up my mind to stop," said Grettir; and he looked so dogged that Thorhall opposed him no more.

All was quiet next night; not a sound roused Grettir from his slumber. Next morning he went with the farmer to the stable. The strong wooden door was shivered, and driven in. They stepped across it: Grettir called to his horse, but there was no responsive whinny.

"I am afraid," began Thorhall. Grettir leaped in, and found the poor brute dead, and with its neck broken.

"Now," said Thorhall quickly, "I've got a capital horse, a skewbald, down by Tunga. I shall not be many moments in fetching it: your saddle is here, I think, and then you will just have time to reach"—

"I stay here another night," interrupted Grettir.

"I implore you to depart," said Thorhall.

"My horse is slain."

“But I shall provide you with another.”

“Friend,” answered Grettir, turning so sharply round that the farmer jumped back, half frightened, “no man ever did me an injury without rueing it. Now, your demon herdsman has been the death of my horse. He must be taught a lesson.”

“Would that he were!” groaned Thorhall; “but mortal must not face him. Go in peace, and receive compensation from me for what has happened.”

“I must revenge my horse.”

“An obstinate man must have his own way. But, if you will run your head against a stone wall, don’t be angry because you get a broken pate.”

Night came on: Grettir eat a hearty supper, and was right jovial; not so Thorhall, who had his misgivings. At bedtime the latter crept into his crib, which, in the manner of old Icelandic beds, opened out of the hall, as berths do out of a cabin. Grettir, however, determined on remaining up; so he flung himself on a bench with his feet against the posts of the high seat, and his back against Thorhall’s crib; then he wrapped one lappet of his fur coat around his feet, the other about his head, keeping the neck-opening in front of his face, so that he could look through into the hall.

There was a fire burning on the hearth, a smouldering heap of red embers; every now and then a twig flared up, and crackled, giving Grettir glimpses of the rafters as he lay with his eyes wandering among the mysteries of the smoke-blackened roof. The wind whistled softly overhead. Soothingly the river prattled over its shingly bed as it swept round

the knoll on which stood the farm. Grettir heard the breathing of the sleeping women in the adjoining chamber, and the sigh of the housewife as she turned into her bed.

Click, click ! It is only the frozen turf on the roof cracking with intense cold. The wind lulls completely. The night is very still without.

Hark ! a heavy tread, beneath which the snow crackles. Every footfall goes straight to Grettir's heart. A crash on the turf overhead ! By all the saints in paradise ! the vampire is treading on the roof ! For one moment the chimney-gap is completely darkened ; the monster is looking down it : the flash of the red ash is reflected in two lustreless eyes. Then the moon glances sweetly in once more, and the heavy tramp of Glámr is audibly moving towards the farther end of the hall. A thud ! He has leaped down. Grettir feels the board at his back quivering ; for Thorhall is awake, and is trembling in his bed. The steps pass round to the back of the house, and then the snapping of wood shows that the creature is destroying some of the out-house doors. He tires of this, apparently ; for his footfall comes clear towards the main entrance to the hall. The moon is veiled behind a watery cloud, and, by the uncertain glimmer, Grettir fancies that he sees two dark hands thrust in above the door. His apprehensions are verified ; for, with a loud snap, a long strip of panel breaks, and light is admitted. Snap, snap ! another portion gives way, and the gap becomes larger. Then the wattles flip out of their laces, and a dark arm rips them out in bunches,

and flings them away. There is a cross-beam to the door, holding a bolt which slides into a stone groove. Against the gray light Grettir sees a huge black figure heaving itself over the bar. Crack ! that has given way, and the rest of the door falls in shivers to the earth.

“ O God ! ” exclaims the bonder.

Stealthily the dead man creeps on, feeling at the beams as he comes ; then he stands in the hall with the fire-light on him. A fearful sight : the tall figure distended with the corruption of the grave, the nose fallen off, the wandering, vacant eyes, with the glaze of death on them, the sallow flesh patched with green masses of decay ; the wolf-gray hair and beard have grown in the tomb, and hang matted about the shoulders and breast ; the nails too, they have grown. It is a sickening sight, a thing to shudder at, not to see.

Motionless, with no nerve quivering now, Thorhall and Grettir hold their breath.

Glámr's lifeless glance strayed round the chamber : it rested on the shaggy bundle by the high-seat. Cautiously he stepped towards it. Grettir felt him groping about the lower lappet, and pulling at it. The cloak did not give way. Another jerk ; Grettir kept his feet firmly pressed against the posts, so that the rug was not pulled off. The vampire seemed puzzled : he plucked at the upper flap, and tugged. Grettir held to the bench and bed-board, so that he was not moved himself, but the cloak was rent in twain ; and the corpse staggered back, holding half in his hands, and gazing wonderingly at it. Before

it had done examining the shred, Grettir started to his feet, bowed his body, flung his arms about the carcass, and, driving his head into the chest, strove to bend it backward, and snap the spine. A vain attempt! The cold hands came down on Grettir's arms with diabolical force, driving them from their hold. Grettir clasped them about the body again; then the arms closed round him, and began dragging him along. The brave man clung by his feet to benches and posts, but the strength of the vampire was greatest: posts gave way, benches were heaved from their places, and the wrestlers at each moment neared the door. Sharply writhing loose, Grettir flung his hands round a roof-beam. He was dragged from his feet; the numbing arms clinched him about the waist, and tore at him; every tendon in his breast was strained, the strain under his shoulders became excruciating, the muscles stood out in knots. Still he held on: his fingers were bloodless; the pulses of his temples throbbed in jerks; the breath came in a whistle through his rigid nostrils. All the while, too, the long nails of the dead man cut into his side, and Grettir could feel them piercing like knives between his ribs. Ah! his hands gave way, and the monster bore him reeling towards the porch, crashing over the broken fragments of the door. Hard as the battle had gone with him indoors, Grettir knew that it would go worse outside: so he gathered up his remaining strength for one final desperate struggle.

As the wrestlers neared the opening, Grettir planted both his feet against the stone posts, holding

Glámr by the middle. He had the advantage now. The dead man writhed in his arms, drove his talons into Grettir's back, and tore up great ribbons of flesh; but the stone-jambs held firm.

"Now," thought Grettir, "I can break his back," and thrusting his head under the chin, so that the grizzly beard covered his eyes, he forced the face from him, and the back was bent as a hazel-rod.

"If I can but hold on," thought Grettir, and he tried to shout for Thorhall; but his voice was muffled in the hair of the corpse.

Crack! One or both of the door-posts gave way. Down crashed the gable-trees, ripping beams and rafters from their beds; frozen clods of turf rattled from the roof, and thumped into the snow. Glámr fell on his back, and Grettir staggered down on top of him.

Grettir's strength was failing him, his hands quivered in the snow, and he knew that he could not support himself from dropping flat on the dead man's face, eye to eye, lip to lip, nose to where the nose *had* been. The eyes of the corpse were fixed on him, lit with the cold glare of the moon. His head swam, as his heart sent a hot stream through his brain.

Then a voice from the gray lips said, —

"Thou hast acted madly in seeking to match thyself with me. Now learn, that henceforth ill-luck shall constantly attend thee, that thy strength shall never exceed what it is now, and that by night these eyes of mine shall stare at thee through the darkness till thy dying day, so that for very horror thou shalt not endure to be alone."

Grettir at this moment noticed that his dirk had slipped from its sheath during the fall, and that it now lay conveniently near his hand.

The giddiness which had oppressed him passed away : he clutched at the sword-haft, and with a blow severed the vampire's throat. Then, kneeling on the breast, he hacked till the head came off.

Thorhall came out now, his face blanched with terror ; but, when he saw how the fray had terminated, he assisted Grettir, gleefully, to roll the corpse on top of a pile of fagots which had been collected for winter fuel. Fire was applied ; and soon, far down Vatnsdalr, the flames of the pyre startled people, and made them wonder what new horror was being enacted in the Vale of Shadows.

CHAPTER XX.

Grettir, in Despair, seeks Counsel. — His Last Refuge. — Outlaw's Isle. — Solitary Life. — Hunted there and killed.

POOR Grettir! hustled from pillar to post, hunted from one retreat to another, he had spent fifteen years of hardship such as few men have undergone; yet the hatred of his deadly foe, Thorir, had not expended itself. The outlaw's career drew to a close.

At length, about the year 1029, finding that no corner of Iceland was safe, he asked Gúthmundr the wealthy to advise him whither he should flee, to be safe from his pursuers.

“There is only one spot that I know of where you can be in perfect security.”

Grettir replied that he had hitherto found no such spot.

Gúthmundr continued, “There is an islet in the Skaga-fjord, hight Drángey, abounding in fish and fowl; and no one can ascend it except by a rope-ladder which hangs down on one of the sides. If you can reach that spot, then you may be assured that it is in no man's power to touch you, so long as you are safe and sound, and able to guard the ladder.”

“I will venture out there,” said Grettir; “yet I

am so timorous in the dark, that, to save my life, I cannot abide alone."

Gúthmundr answered, "Nay, but I advise you to trust no one but your own self."

Grettir thanked him for his advice, and then hastened home to his mother, at Bjarg, in the Middle Frith. The fear of the dark to which he alluded had come on him ever since his wrestle with Glámr, but had increased considerably of late. No sooner did darkness set in, than the terrible eyes of the vampire seemed to stare at him from the gloom. He slept lightly, starting in his dreams, and waking repeatedly during the night. This was undoubtedly brought on by the unceasing strain on his mind, and the excitability of nerves, caused by the hourly peril in which he had been living for so many years.

On his arrival at Bjarg, his mother greeted him affectionately, and told him that she would indeed be glad if he could remain with her; though she feared it would be too venturesome to do so, as Thorir would certainly discover his retreat before many days had elapsed.

The outlaw replied that he would give her no inconvenience. "For," said he, "I care to take no more trouble about preserving my life. I can bear my solitude no longer." He then told his mother of Gúthmundr's advice; adding, that he would try his best to reach Drángey, but that he must endeavor to secure some trustworthy companion to be with him.

Illugi, his brother, now fifteen years old, a fine, noble boy, was present during the conversation; and,

at these words of Grettir, he started up, caught his hand, and said, —

“ Brother, I will go with you if I may, though I fear you will look upon me as a feeble helpmate ; yet I will be faithful to you, and stand by you to the last.”

Grettir answered, “ Of all men, my brother, I would rather have you with me ; and willingly will I consent to your joining your lot with mine, if our mother has no objection.”

“ Sorrows never come singly,” replied the aged woman. “ I can hardly bear to part with Illugi ; yet I know how dire is your necessity of a comrade, son Grettir : therefore I will not be selfish, and keep him. It costs me a bitter pang to part with both my sons in one day.”

Illugi was delighted at having thus easily obtained that on which he had set his heart, and he thanked his mother cordially.

The mother provided her sons with money, and such chattels as they would require on the island ; and then she accompanied them outside the farm-yard, and, before parting with them, said, “ Farewell, my two brave boys ! I know that I shall never see you again ; but, what will befall you in Drángey, I know not. Only of this I am certain, that there you will die, for many will resent your occupation of that island. My dreams have long forewarned me that you will not be divided in your deaths. Beware of treachery, shun any dealings with sorcery ; for nothing is more powerful than witchcraft. My blessing be upon you both ! ” She could speak no

more, for her voice was choked with sobs ; so, sitting down on a stone, she covered her eyes with her hands, and the tears trickled between her fingers, falling in bright drops on her lap.

“ Do not weep, mother,” said Grettir : “ what though we both die ? It shall ever be said of you that you bore sons, and not daughters. Long life and health attend you ! ”

Then they parted ; and the brothers went north, and visited their kinsmen. Here they met a tall, thin, ragged man, a bachelor, whose chatty, gossiping ways Grettir liked, and induced him to join them in exile. His name was Glaum.

After this they went to Reynines ; thence they proceeded to the strand, where there is a little byre, Reykir, with a hot spring, in the tún, belonging to a man named Thorwaldr. Grettir offered him a bag of silver if he would flit him across to Drángey by moonlight, and to this the man agreed.

On arriving at his destination, Grettir was well pleased with the spot ; for it was covered with a profusion of grass, and was so precipitous that it seemed impossible for any one to ascend it without the aid of the rope-ladder, which hung from strong staples at the summit. In summer the place would swarm with sea-birds, and at that time there were eighty sheep left on the island for fattening.

One of the principal chiefs in the Skaga-fjord was Thorbjorn, nicknamed “ The Hook,” a hard-hearted, ill-disposed fellow.

As many as twenty farmers had rights of pasture on Drángey ; but the Hook and his brother had the greatest share.

About the time of the winter solstice, the bonders busked them to visit the island, and bring home their sheep. They rowed out in a large boat, and, on nearing the island, were surprised to see figures moving on the top of the cliffs. How any one had reached the islet without their knowledge was a puzzle to them, and they had not the slightest suspicion who these occupants could be. They pulled hard for the landing-place where hung the ladder, but Grettir drew it up before the boat stranded.

The bonders shouted to know who those were on the crags; and Grettir, looking over, told them.

The bonders asked who had flitted him across to the island. Grettir answered, "If you wish particularly to know, I will tell you: it was a man with a good boat and strong arms, and one who was rather my friend than yours."

"Let us get our sheep," cried the bonders; "and you come to land with us. We will charge you nothing for those of our sheep which you have eaten, and we will let you go from us in peace."

"Well offered," answered Grettir; "but he who takes keeps hold, and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Believe me, I never leave the island till I am carried from it dead."

The bonders were silenced: it seemed to them that they had got an ugly customer on Drángey, to get rid of whom would be no easy matter; so they rowed home, very ill pleased at the result of their expedition.

The news spread like wildfire, and was talked

about all through the neighborhood ; but no one could devise a plan for getting rid of the outlaw.

Winter passed ; and, at the beginning of spring, the whole district met at the "Thing," or Council, of Hegranness, an extensive island at the mouth of Heradsvatn River. The gathering was thronged, and the litigations and merry-making made the Thing last over many days. Grettir guessed what was going on, by seeing a number of boats pass the head of the fjord. He became very restless, and at last announced to his brother that he intended being present at the council. Illugi thought this sheer madness, but Grettir was resolute. He begged Illugi and Glaum to watch the ladder, and await his return.

Then he crossed to the mainland, and hastened in disguise to the council, where he found that sports of all kinds were going on among the able-bodied young men. Grettir was dressed in an old-fashioned suit, very dirty, and falling to tatters. He had on a fur cap, which was drawn closely over his eyes, and concealed his face so that no one recognized him. He sauntered among the booths till he reached the spot where the games were taking place.

Among the wrestlers, no man surpassed Thorbjorn Hook in skill and prowess. He threw all the strongest men of the neighborhood ; and when he had cleared the ground of antagonists, and found that there was no one to oppose him, he stood still, and cast his eyes round him. Suddenly they rested on a tall fellow in the shabbiest and quaintest of suits, but who looked so strongly built that Thorbjorn

walked up to him, and caught him by the shoulders. But the man sat still, and he could not move him from his seat. "Well," exclaimed the Hook, "you are the first fellow I have seen for many a day whom I couldn't pull off his stool. Come now, and wrestle with me; yet tell me first what is your name?"

"Guest," answered the stranger.

"A welcome guest too," quoth the bully, "if you will wrestle with me."

The man replied that they would not be fairly matched, as he was little skilled in athletic sports.

Several men now chimed in, begging the stranger to try what he could do with Thorbjorn, or, at all events, with one of the others.

"Long, long ago," quoth he, "I was able to throw my man as well as the best of you; but those days are gone by, and now I am out of practice."

As he only half refused, the bystanders urged him all the more.

"Now mark you!" said he; "I yield on one condition; and that is, that you take your oath to let me go free to my home, without one of you lifting a hand against me."

There was a general shout of acquiescence; and Hafr, one of the number, recited the peace-oath, which was, in its curses upon the violation of it, more fearful than the anathemas of papal Rome. He was to be "cast out of the presence of God, good men, and the heavenly kingdom; banished from churches, the company of Christian men, from heathen folk, from house and den, from every home save hell!"

After a little hesitation the oath was taken by all.

Then said Guest, "Now you have done well, only beware of breaking your oaths. I am ready on my part, without delay, to fulfil your wishes." Then he flung aside his hood, and almost all his tatters.

The assembled chiefs looked at each other, and were rather disconcerted; for they saw that there stood before them the redoubted Grettir, Asmund's son. They were silent, and Hafr thought that he had acted somewhat rashly. The throng broke up into knots, and began to discuss whether the oath should be kept or not.

"Come now," shouted Grettir: "let me know your purposes, for I shall not long sit naked. There is more danger to you than to me, in the breach of your oaths."

He got no answer, but the chiefs moved away to discuss the question. Some wanted to break the truce; others wanted to keep it. Then Grettir sang, —

"Many trees of wealth, this morning,
Failed the well-known, well to know,
Two ways turn the sea-flame branches,
When a trick on them is tried.
Falter folk their oath fulfilling,
Hafr's talking lips are dumb."

Said a man hight Tongue-stone, "You think so, do you, Grettir? Well, you are a man of dauntless courage: I will say that for you. Look now! the chiefs are in deep consultation about what is to be done with you."

Then Grettir sang, —

“Lifters of shields rub their noses,
Shield-tempest gods shake their beards,
Fierce-hearted serpents’ lair scatterers
Go on their way, much regretting,
Peace they have made, — now they know me ! ”

Then out spake Hjalti of Hóf, brother of Thorbjorn Hook: “Never let it be said of us, that we break an oath, even though it were inconsiderately taken. Grettir shall be at full liberty to go to his home in peace; and woe betide him who lays hand on him to do him injury! But, should he venture again ashore, we are free from our oath.”

All, except Thorbjorn Hook, agreed to this, and were glad that Hjalti had spoken out as became a chieftain.

The wrestling began by Grettir being matched with Thorbjorn; and, after a short struggle, Grettir freed himself from his antagonist, leaped over his back, caught him by the belt of his trousers, lifted him off his legs, and flung him over his back.

It was next proposed that Grettir should be matched against the two brothers together, and he readily agreed to this. The wrestling continued with unabated vigor, and it was impossible to tell which side had the mastery; for, though Grettir repeatedly threw one brother after the other, yet he was unable to hold them both down at the same time. After that all three were covered with blood and bruises, the match was closed by the judges deciding that the two brothers conjointly were not

stronger than Grettir alone, though they were each of them as powerful as two ordinary able-bodied men.

Grettir at once left the Thing, rejecting all the entreaties of the farmers, that he should leave Drángey ; and, on his return to the little island, he was received by his brother Illugi with open arms.

The smaller bonders began to feel seriously their want of the island for autumn pasture ; and, as there seemed no prospect of their getting rid of Grettir, they sold their rights to Thorbjorn Hook, who set himself in earnest to devise a plan by which he could possess himself of the island.

When Grettir had been two winters on the island, he had eaten all the sheep, except one ram, a piebald fellow with magnificent horns, which became so tame, that every evening he came to the hovel which Grettir had erected, and butted at the door till he was admitted. The brothers liked their place of exile, as there was no dearth of eggs and birds, besides which, a considerable amount of drift-timber was thrown upon the strand, and served as fuel.

Grettir and Illugi spent their days in clambering among the rocks, and rifling the nests ; and the occupation of the thrall was to collect drift-wood, and keep up the fire in the cottage.

The inhabitants of Skaga-fjord were angry with Thorbjorn Hook for not having rid the island of its tenants, notwithstanding all his fine promises ; but Thorbjorn was sorely puzzled to know what measures to take.

During the summer, a ship arrived in the frith,

commanded by a young, active fellow, Hoering by name, who was famous for his skill in climbing. He lodged with Thorbjorn during the autumn, and was continually urging his host to row him out to Drángey, that he might escalade the precipitous sides of the islet. Thorbjorn required very little pressing ; and, one fine afternoon, he flitted his guest out to the island, and put him stealthily ashore, without attracting the notice of those on the height.

On reaching the usual landing-place, which was on the opposite side of the island, Thorbjorn shouted, and brought Grettir and his brother to the verge of the cliff. The old arguments were repeated, to persuade Grettir to come to the mainland, and with the usual success. The Hook, however, succeeded completely in his attempt to withdraw the outlaw's attention from the farther side of the islet, up which Hoering was clambering.

The young merchant reached the top by a way never attempted before nor since ; then, pausing only to take breath, he advanced towards the brothers, who were leaning over the verge of the cliff, little dreaming of danger in their rear.

Grettir was engaged in angry altercation with the Hook, but the young brother took no part in the conversation ; and, beginning to feel weary of his position, he turned on one side to relieve his elbows, which had rested on the rock. In so doing, he caught sight of Hoering.

“ Brother, brother ! exclaimed he, “ here comes a man towards us, brandishing an axe, and bent on mischief.”

"Go after him yourself, lad!" said Grettir. "I will guard the ladder."

Illugi sprang up, and rushed towards the young merchant, who at once took to flight, ran to the edge of the crag, leaped over, and was dashed to pieces among the rocks. That spot is called Hoering's Leap to this day.

"Now, Thorbjorn," shouted Grettir, when Illugi returned, and told him what had taken place, "you had better row round to the other side of the isle, and gather up the remains of your friend."

The Hook pushed off from the strand, and returned home, ill enough pleased with what had taken place; and Grettir remained at Drángey unmolested through the winter.

Thorbjorn Hook was exasperated beyond measure at the prospect of Grettir slipping through his fingers after all; and he returned from the Thing brooding over fresh schemes against the outlaw.

It happened that he had an old, feeble foster-mother, a woman of malicious disposition; and, when Thorbjorn could get help nowhere else, he came to her; as in her youth she had dabbled in sorcery, but had long ceased to practise it, when, after the introduction of Christianity, it became illegal, and was punishable with banishment.

"Ah!" said she, when Thorbjorn came to her, "I see that, as a last resource, you come to me, a bed-ridden old woman, and ask my help. Well, I will assist you to the best of my power, on one condition; and that is, that you yield me implicit obedience."

The Hook answered her that he was quite willing to consent, as he had long since learned to rely on his foster-mother's advice as being most salutary.

When the month of August came round, the hag said to her foster-son, one beautiful day, "The sea is calm, and the sky bright: what say you to our rowing over to Drángey, and stirring up the old quarrel with Grettir? I will accompany you, and listen to what he says. I shall then be able to judge what lot awaits him; besides, I can death-doom him as I please."

The Hook answered, "I am tired of going to Drángey, for I never return from it a whit the better off than when I started."

"Remember your promise," said the old woman: "I shall have nothing to do with you unless you follow my advice."

"Well, then, foster-mother," quoth Thorbjorn, "let us go, though I vowed that my third visit should be the death of Grettir."

"Have patience," said the hag: "time and trouble are needed before that man is laid low; and, what the result will be, I know not. It may be to your gain, and it may be to your ruin."

Thorbjorn ran out a long boat, and entered it with twelve men. The hag sat in the bows, coiled up amongst wraps and rugs.

When they reached the island, the brothers ran to the ladder, and Thorbjorn asked whether Grettir was yet tired of his island.

Grettir replied as he had replied before, "Do what you will: in this spot I await my destiny."

Thorbjorn saw now that his journey was likely to be without avail. "I see," said he, "that I have to do with the worst of men. One thing is clear enough: it will be a long time before I pay you another visit."

"So much the better," answered Grettir. "I shall not count it as a misfortune if I never see you again."

At this moment the hag began to stir in the bows of the boat. Grettir had not previously observed her presence. Now, with a shrill voice, she cried, "These men are sturdy, but luck has deserted them. See what a difference there is between folk. You, Thorbjorn, make them good offers, which they foolishly reject. Those who refuse good when it is offered them, always come to a bad end. Grettir, I wish you to be lost to health, wisdom, luck, and prudence. May these blessings be constantly on the wane the longer you live! and may your days henceforth be fewer and sadder than those preceding them!"

As she spoke, a cold shudder ran over Grettir's limbs, and he asked what fiend that was in the ship. Illugi replied that she must be the foster-mother of Thorbjorn.

"Since an evil fiend is with our foes, we can expect nothing but the worst," said Grettir. "Never before have I been so agitated at words spoken, as whilst the hag was pouring forth her curses on us. I know now that evil must befall me from her witchcraft, but she shall have a reminder of her visit to me."

Then he snatched up a large stone, and flung it

into the boat, so that it fell upon the bundle of rugs among which lay the aged woman. As it struck, there rose a wild shriek from the witch, for the stone had fallen on her leg, and snapped it asunder.

“ Brother, you should not have done this,” said Illugi.

“ Blame me not!” answered Grettir. “ I only wish that the stone had fallen on her skull, and that her life had been sacrificed instead of ours.”

On the return of Thorbjorn to the mainland, the hag was put to bed; and the Hook was less pleased than ever with his trip to the island.

“ Be not downcast,” said his foster-mother: “ this is the turning-point of Grettir’s fortunes, and his luck will leave him more and more. I have no fear of not having my revenge, should my life be spared.”

“ You are a resolute woman, foster-mother,” said Thorbjorn Hook.

After a month the old woman was able to leave her bed, and limp across the room. She one day demanded to be led down to the shore. Her wishes were complied with; and, on reaching the strand, she hobbled up and down till she found a large piece of drift-timber, just large enough for a man to carry upon his shoulder.

Then she ordered it to be rolled towards her, and turned over. She examined it attentively. The log seemed to have been charred on one side, and this burned portion she ordered to be planed away; then, taking a knife, she cut runes on it, and smeared them with her blood, chanting over them, as she limped round the beam, a wild spell that it might

be borne to Drángey, and there work Grettir's ill. The piece of timber was then pushed into the waves, and thrust off from shore. A fresh northerly wind was blowing ; but the beam swam against wind and tide, and held on its course direct for the outlaw's isle.

The old witch returned to Vithoik. Thorbjorn did not think that any thing would come of what she had done ; but she bade him be of good cheer, and wait till she gave him fresh orders.

In the mean time Grettir his brother and the churl, were on Drángey, catching fish and fowl for their winter supplies.

The day after that on which the hag had charmed the piece of timber, the two brothers were walking on the strand to the west of the island, looking for drift-wood.

“ Here is a fine log ! ” exclaimed Illugi. “ Help me to lift it on my shoulder, and I will carry it home.”

Grettir spurned the beam with his foot, saying, “ I do not like the looks of it, little brother. Runes are cut on it, and they may betide us ill : who knows but this log may have been sent hither for our destruction ? ”

Then they sent it adrift, and Grettir warned his brother not to bring it to the fire.

They returned in the evening to their hovel, and did not mention the matter before the thrall.

The next day they found the same beam washed up not far from the foot of the ladder. Grettir thrust it out to sea again, saying that he hoped he had seen the last of it.

The weather began to break up, and several days of storm and rain succeeded each other, so that the three men remained indoors till their stock of fire-wood was nearly expended.

Then they ordered Glaum to search the shore for fuel. The fellow started up with an angry murmur, and left the room muttering that the weather was too bad for a dog to be sent out in it. Then he went to the rope-ladder, descended it, and found the same beam cast up at its very foot.

Rejoiced at having so soon obtained what he wanted, he threw it over his shoulder, strode with it to the hut, and flung it down by the door.

Grettir heard the sound ; and, springing up, he exclaimed, “ Glaum has got something at last ! Let us see what he has found.”

Then, taking his axe, he went outside.

“ Now,” says Glaum, “ you chop it up, as I have had all the trouble of bringing it.”

Grettir was angry with the fellow, and, without paying much attention to the log itself, he brought his axe down upon it with a sweep. The blade struck, glided off, and cut into Grettir’s right leg below the knee with such force that it stuck in the bone.

Grettir looked at the beam, and, recognizing it at once, said, “ The worst is at hand ! Misfortunes never come singly. This is the very log which I have rejected twice, Glaum. You have done us two ill turns ; first, in letting out the fire, secondly, in bringing home this accursed beam ; and, if you commit a third, it will be the death of you.”

Illugi bound up his brother's wound with a rag: there was but little flow of blood, but it was an ugly gash.

Grettir slept well that night. For three days and nights, he was without pain, and the wound seemed to be healing nicely, and skin to be forming healthily over it.

"Well, brother," said Illugi, "I think this cut will not trouble you long."

"I hope not," answered Grettir, "yet I have my fears."

On the fourth evening they laid them down to sleep as usual. Towards midnight the lad Illugi awoke, hearing Grettir tossing about in his bed, as though in pain.

"Why are you so restless?" he asked.

Grettir replied that he felt great anguish in his leg, and that he thought some slight change must have taken place in the wound.

The boy blew some embers on the hearth into a flame, and by its light examined his brother's leg. He found that the foot was swollen and purple, and that the wound had re-opened, and looked far more angry than when first made.

Intense pain followed; so that the poor outlaw could not remain quiet for one moment, and sleep no more visited his eyes.

Illugi remained by him, continually holding his brother's hand, or bringing him water to slake his unquenchable thirst.

"We must prepare for the worst," said Grettir. "This sickness is the result of sorcery. The hag is revenging on me that stone which I cast at her."

Illugi replied, "I ever thought evil would come of it."

"Let us be cautious now," said Grettir, "for Thorbjorn will make another venture. Glaum, do you watch the steps by day, and draw them up at dusk. Be a faithful servant to us, for much depends on your fulfilling your duty; and I forewarn you, that, if you betray your trust, it will cost you your life."

Glaum promised well.

The weather daily became worse; and a fierce north-east wind blustered over the country, bearing with it cold and sleet, and powdering the highlands with snow. Grettir asked nightly whether the ladder had been drawn up. Glaum answered churlishly, "How can you expect people to come out in such a storm as this? Do you think that folk are so anxious to kill you that they will be crazy enough to jeopardize their own lives in the attempt? No, no! You have lost all your pluck and manliness since you have been a little unwell. You are now scared and frightened at the merest trifles."

Grettir answered, "You have none of our pluck and manliness yourself! Go now, and guard the ladder as you have been bidden, instead of standing here reproaching me with cowardice!"

So Illugi and his brother drove the churl from the house every morning, notwithstanding all his angry remonstrances.

The pain became more acute, and the whole leg became inflamed and swollen; signs of mortification appeared, and wounds opened in different parts of

the limb, so that Grettir felt that the shadow of death was upon him. Illugi sat night and day with his brother's head on his shoulder, bathing his forehead, and doing his utmost to console the fleeting spirit. A week had elapsed since the wound had been made.

Thorbjorn Hook was at home, ill pleased at the failure of all his schemes for dispossessing Grettir of the island. One day his foster-mother came to him, and asked whether he was ready now to pay the outlaw his final visit. Thorbjorn replied that he had no wish to do so, as it would come to nothing; and asked his foster-mother whether she had any desire to seek out Grettir again, or whether she had been satisfied with the success of her former visit.

“I may not ask him myself,” answered the hag; “but I have sent him my greeting, and by this time it has reached him. Speed now to Drángey as swiftly as you can row; for, if you delay, he will be beyond your reach.”

The Hook had come off so ignominiously on every former occasion when he had visited the island, that he did not much relish the notion of making another attempt, especially on a day when it would be dangerous to venture on the water in a boat.

“You're a helpless fellow!” exclaimed his foster-mother, when Thorbjorn told her his objections to her scheme. “Do you think that I, who have called up this storm, cannot refrain it from doing you injury?”

Thorbjorn went with his men to Haganess, where he borrowed a large sailing-boat. None of them

were in good spirits, as the weather was so bad, and they had no confidence in their leader. By dusk they got the vessel afloat, spread sail, and, with a lurch, she ran out to sea.

As the wind was from the north-east, they were under the lee of the high cliffs, and were not exposed to the violence of the gale.

A line of white foam marked the base of Drángey; and now and then a great wave from the mouth of the fjord thundered against the crags, and shot in spouts of foam high into the air. Upon the top, one ruddy spark shone from the window of the hovel in which lay the dying outlaw, and it was reflected as a streak of fire on the tossing deep.

Grettir had been in less pain that day: Illugi had not left him, but remained faithful to his post.

The churl had been sent out as usual to watch the ladder, and draw it up at nightfall. But, instead of doing as he was bid, the fellow laid himself down at the head of the steps, in a sheltered nook, and went to sleep.

When Thorbjorn and his party reached the shore, they found that the ladder still hung down.

“We are in luck’s way!” exclaimed the Hook. “Now, my men, perhaps you will think that our journey will not prove as bootless as you expected. Up the ladder with you! and let us all be of good courage!”

Then they ascended, one after another, Thorbjorn taking the lead. On reaching the top, they noticed Glaum asleep under a rock, snoring loudly. Thorbjorn recognized the man at once, and struck him over

the shoulders with his sword-hilt, bidding him wake up, fool that he was, and tell them truly all that he knew about those whom they sought.

Glaum turned over on his side, rubbed his eyes, and growled forth, “ Cannot you leave a poor wretch alone ? assuredly never was man so ill-treated before ; you won’t even let me sleep out here in the cold ! ”

“ Idiot ! ” exclaimed the Hook ; “ look up, and see who are come ! We are your foes, who purpose slaying every man of you.”

Glaum started up, and screamed with terror when he saw the black figures around him.

“ Silence ! ” cried Thorbjorn : “ I give you your choice of two things, — answer the questions I put to you, or die on the spot.”

The churl was silenced, and stood trembling before the Hook, with great drops of perspiration rolling off his face.

“ Are the brothers in the house ? ” asked Thorbjorn ; “ or shall we find them out of doors ? ”

“ Oh ! ” cried Glaum, “ they are both within ; Grettir sick to death, and Illugi watching, and never leaving him.”

All that evening the sick man’s eyes had been wandering among the rafters, watching the light play among them, as the firewood blazed up, or smouldered away. Presently he turned his head towards his brother, saying that he thought he could sleep ; and in a few moments he closed his eyes.

Illugi watched his face kindled by the scarlet glow from the embers. It was more tranquil than he had seen it for many days ; the muscles were relaxed ; and

wrinkles, furrowed on the brow by the intense pain which the poor outlaw had suffered, were now smoothed quite away. Grettir's face was not handsome, but it was grave and earnest, tanned dark by continual exposure to the weather. His breath came evenly in sleep ; one hand lay open, palm uppermost, on the floor ; the other played with the tassel of his spear, which stood ever by his side. Suddenly there was a crash at the door, and the sleeper opened his eyes dreamily.

“It is only the old ram, brother : he wants to come in,” said Illugi, “and is butting at the door.”

“He butts hard, he butts hard !” muttered Grettir, and at that moment the door burst open. They saw faces looking in. Illugi sprang to his feet, grasped a sword, flew to the doorway, and defended it valiantly ; so that none could come within a spear's length of it, for the lad brought down his weapon on their lances, and smote off the heads.

Then some of the men clambered up on the roof, and began to rip off its covering of turf. Grettir tried to rise to his feet, but could only stagger to his knees. He seized his spear, and drove it through the roof, among those who were tearing it down. It struck Karr in the breast, and pierced him.

“Be careful !” cried the Hook ; “be careful, and no harm can happen to you.”

Then the men pulled at the gable-ends, heaved the ridge-piece aside, and broke it asunder, so that a shower of rafters and turf fell into the chamber.

Grettir drew his sword, and smote at the men, as they leaped upon him from the wall. With one

blow he struck Vikarr, the servant of Hjalti, over the left shoulder, as he was upon the point of springing down. The sword sliced through him, and came out below his right arm, and the corpse dropped upon Grettir. The blow was so violent that Grettir fell forward; and, before he could raise himself, Thorbjorn Hook struck him between the shoulders, and made a fearful wound.

Then cried Grettir, “ Bare is man’s back without brother behind it! ” and instantly Illugi threw his shield over him, planted a foot on either side of him, as he lay on the floor, and defended him gallantly, so that all were amazed at his courage.

“ Who showed you the way to the island? ” asked Grettir of the Hook.

“ Christ showed us the way, ” answered Thorbjorn.

“ Nay, nay! ” muttered Grettir: “ it was that hag, your foster-mother, who directed you hither! ”

The mist of death was in his eyes: he attempted to raise himself, but sank again on the sheepskins, which were now drenched in blood. No one could touch him, for the brave lad warded off every blow that was aimed at his brother. Then the Hook ordered his men to form a ring around them, and to close in on them with shields and beams. They did so, and Illugi was taken and bound; but not till he had wounded the majority of his opponents, and killed three of Thorbjorn’s churls.

“ You are a brave fellow! ” said the Hook; “ and never have I seen one of your age who fought so well! ”

Then they went up to Grettir, who lay in a state of unconsciousness, without being able to make any resistance.

They dealt him many a blow, but little blood flowed from the wounds. When all thought that he was dead, Thorbjorn tried to disengage the sword from his cold, damp fingers, saying that Grettir had wielded it long enough.

But the strong man's hand was clinched around the hand so firmly, that his enemy could not free the sword from his grasp.

Several of the men came up, and endeavored to unweave the fingers, but they were unable to do so. Then the Hook exclaimed, "Why should we spare this vile outlaw? off with his hand!" and they held it down, whilst he hewed it from the arm, at the wrist. Then the muscles of the fingers relaxed; and the Hook was able to loosen them, and possess himself of the sword. Standing beside the body, and grasping the hilt with both hands, he smote at Grettir's head: the edge of the blade was notched with the blow. "See!" laughed Thorbjorn: "this mark will be famous in the history of my sword. I shall show the notch, and say, 'This was done by Grettir's skull!'" He smote twice and thrice at the outlaw's neck, till the head came off in his hands.

"Here have I slain a famous warrior!" exclaimed Thorbjorn: "this head shall come with me to land, that I may claim the price that has been set upon it, and that none may be able to deny that I slew the redoubted Grettir."

The rest of the party told him to do as he chose,

but they did not think much of his act ; for they believed Grettir to have been dead before Thorbjorn smote at his head, and they suspected that he had wrought his foe's sickness and death by unhallowed means.

Then the Hook turned to Illugi, saying, “ It would be a pity that a brave lad like you should die, because you have associated yourself with outlaws and evil-doers.”

Illugi answered, “ At Althing you shall be summoned to give an account of this cursed deed, and answer to the charge of witchcraft, which I shall bring against you if I live.”

“ Listen to me, boy,” said the Hook. “ Lay your hand to my hand, and take a vow never to revenge that which has taken place to-night, and I will give you life and liberty.”

“ And listen to me, Thorbjorn,” replied Illugi. “ If I survive, but one thought shall occupy my heart, night and day ; and that will be, how I can best avenge my brother. Now that you know what to expect from me, choose whether I shall live or die.”

Thorbjorn took his companions aside to ask their advice ; but they shrugged their shoulders, and replied that, as he had planned the expedition, he must carry it through as he thought best.

“ Well,” exclaimed the Hook, “ I have no fancy for having the young viper ready to sting me wherever I tread. So he shall die.”

Now, when Illugi knew that they had determined on slaying him, he smiled, and said,—

“ You have chosen that course which is most to my mind.”

As the day began to dawn, they led him to the east side of the island, and slew him there. It is said that they neither bound his hands nor eyes, and that he looked fearlessly at them as they smote him, and neither winked, nor changed color. Then they buried the brothers beneath a cairn ; but they took the head of Grettir, and bore it with them to land.

As they rowed home, the thrall, Glaum, made such outcries that they were tired of his noise ; and on reaching the mainland they slew him.

One morning Thorbjorn Hook rode with twenty men to Bjarg, in the Middle Frith, with Grettir’s head hanging at his saddle-bow. On reaching the house he dismounted, and stalked into the hall, where Grettir’s mother was seated with her servant.

Thorbjorn flung her son’s head at her feet, and sang, —

“ Flitted I from the island,
With me the head of Grettir ;
That yellow head, which women
Weep ; with it I am standing.
Look you ! the peace-destroyer’s
Head lyeth on the pavement ;
Look you ! it cannot moulder
Now that it well is salted.”

The lady sat proudly in her seat, and did not shed a tear ; but, lifting her voice in reply, she sang, —

“ Milksop ! no less than sheep
Flee before the fox,
Would you have fled before
Grettir strong and hale ! ”

After this the Hook returned home ; and folk wondered at Asdisa, saying that none but she could have borne such sons as those twain who slept in Drángey.

In a note received from Prof. Jon Bjarnasson, he says of the famous national hero of Iceland, Grettir the Strong, “He is at this time a very interesting character in the public opinion there. The common people believe in fate that marks this Saga ; and all the best minds of our national literature will always suggest the philosophic, melancholic, but also jovial character of the hero highly beloved.”

With reluctance we leave the old Sagas, especially with a recently imported copy at hand of Dr. Dasent’s “Burnt Njal.” The intensely tragic narrative resembles that of Grettir, but is more complete, more extended, as a picture of life in Iceland nine centuries ago.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Christian Era in Iceland. — The Gathering at Thingvalla. — The High Debate. — The Thunder of a Convulsion. — The Great Decision. — Golden Age. — Skalds. — An Icelandic Skald at Canute's Court. — Written Constitution. — A Challenge. — Nithing.

IT is a summer day of year 1000, and Iceland was never so deeply moved through all its borders as now. A throng, larger than ever gathered before in Thingvalla, is defiling into it on this calm afternoon. Down the precipitous entrance of the Almanne-Gja, and the causeway of the Rafne, the processions emerge into the grand audience-room built by fire. The chiefs with their attendants, and the wealthy landholders on their richly caparisoned horses, succeed each other. On horseback and afoot, the poorer classes pour into the broad valley. Tents and booths rapidly go up on the patches of grass, and on the dark stone floor. The scene is impressive and animated. An anticipated debate possesses interest reaching far beyond the duration of the munition of rocks around the excited throng.

The leading men of the nation cross the narrow bridge which leads into the enclosure of legislation. The assembly is formally opened, amid the stillness and grandeur of Jehovah's temple, where an issue is to be made between his claims and Odin's.

Among the people, some had never renounced Thor, the principal god of the north, before Odin supplanted him from the East; others had abandoned idols altogether; and each household had pretty much its own way, in forms of worship.

Ingolf's grandson, Thorkill, when he felt death was near, desired to be carried into the open air, where the cheerful light might gladden his eyes while looking their last upon the loved mountain-tops, and there commend his spirit to Him who created them, and, high above them, the sun, moon, and stars.

In their voyages to England and Denmark, Icelanders had seen and accepted Christian rites, as then observed; but like the idolatrous Hebrews three thousand years before, who mixed their devotions so absurdly, upon their return home they worshipped again Odin or Thor.

The latter part of the tenth century, Thorwald, a bold sea-rover, "who had been baptized on the banks of the Elbe by a German priest," brought him to Iceland, the first missionary from the continent. This was under the presidency of Thorkil Manni.

The stranger had some success, and was followed, a few years later, by priests from Norway.

They were sent out by King Olaf, who was zealous in the propagation of the faith among the colonies from his realm.

Among them were two Icelandic converts, who had been compelled to go abroad, on account of their active part in the introduction of the new religion.

But an ancient idolatry would not easily die, resisting instinctively all attacks upon its life.

To appease the gods, its devotees determined to offer to them two human sacrifices from each of the four quarters of Iceland. It is related that the missionaries, to display as great a zeal, decided to seal their own faith with the blood of four martyrs.

Thorgeir, the Lögösmodr, appealed to both parties to stop on the edge of civil war, before they wrought destruction and ruin.

The stirring address produced conviction, which ripened into a truce ; and they returned to their places in the Althing, to submit their cause to the great assembly.

In the midst of the high debate, a messenger enters Thingvalla with the tidings of a volcanic eruption near, whose thunders shake the earth.

“Behold ! the gods are angry because we question their power and right to our homage !” exclaims a worshipper of Odin. He pauses, and Snorre Gode hurls back the charge, by asking, “What excited their wrath when these rocks of lava, which we ourselves tread, were a glowing torrent ?” The splendid retort, with the appeal which followed, thrilled the assembly, and turned the tide of feeling decisively towards the altars of a Christian, although, through human traditions, a superstitious devotion. The doom of a pure idolatry was sealed from that hour ; the temples of Odin and of Thor crumbled before the hands that reared them ; and the Bible and prayer-book supplanted their ancient mythology.

Public idol-worship was forbidden, on penalty of

banishment ; but liberty in private worship permitted, and the continued eating of horse-flesh, and the exposure of infants. These "innocents" were left to die, to prevent an increase of population beyond the means of subsistence. But both practices gradually disappeared. Duels, protected by the laws of the wild vikings of early years, who decided disputes with the sword, alone on some solitary island, could not bear the light of even a corrupted Christianity, and were also abolished.

The centuries following the introduction of Christianity were the golden age of the republic. Under the protection of its patriarchal-republican form of government, the people studiously cultivated their native dialect, and collected the literary fragments of their ancestors. Unlike other European nations, whose literature, at the dawn of it, was a servile imitation of the Roman and Greek classics, the Icelanders, with a singular independence of intellectual character, created one of their own. They gave the world an original literature, before the more favored south in material resources, had commenced the revival of learning.

Of this, the golden age of Icelandic history, Adam of Bremen speaks as follows : " Thus spending in simplicity a holy life, since they seek for nothing beyond what nature yields, the Icelanders can cheerfully say with the apostle, ' Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' For they have their mountains for towns, and springs for delights. Happy, I say, the race whose poverty no one envies ; and happiest in this, that they have now all received

Christianity. There are many remarkable points among their customs, especially charity ; from which it comes, that, with them, all things are common both to strangers as well as to natives. For a king they have their bishop, and to his nod all the people attend : whatever he has laid down, whether from God or from Scripture, or from the customs of other nations, that they have for law."

Like the bards of classic story, the skalds, or poets, of Iceland, were its best historians. Travelling minstrels, they visited other countries, weaving into their strains the myths, traditions, and real history of their own and kindred nations. They became the ambassadors of the age, and were honored in palaces, like the laureates of a later period. One of these saved his life, while imprisoned in England, by his song of twenty strophes, or stanzas, in praise of the tyrant into whose power he fell. Another from Iceland, Snorro relates, kept at the court of Canute, composed a poem in honor of the king, and went to his banqueting-hall to recite it; offering, as an apology for his apparent haste to be heard, that it was "very short." The monarch fixed upon him his falcon eye, and sternly said, "Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared,— to write a short poem upon me ? Unless, by the hour of dinner to-morrow, you produce thirty strophes, your life shall pay the penalty."

The skald was equal to the occasion ; and next day, instead of the executioner's blade, he received thirty marks of silver. These incidents show us the world's loss of numberless "flowers of poetry, which sprang up and bloomed amidst eternal snows."

There were female skalds, as there were warriors, who made no mean figure in the vindication of the right, re-asserted nowadays, to cope with the "lords of creation," in every field of action.

A very strong reason, and easily understood, why the skalds adhered more closely to actual history than poets of the south, is found in their having the whole field to themselves. In the warmer climes, the priesthood were the chroniclers, and the minstrels had to depend mainly upon creations of the imagination for their themes. According to an ancient MS., Iceland's poets, long ago, numbered two hundred and thirty, many of them honored at foreign courts.

Two centuries and a half, Ulfjot's form of government was perpetuated only by tradition. Annually Thingvalla echoed to the repetition of it by the Lögösmódr, from the Hill of Laws. This gives peculiar interest to the republic, the preservation of so great a degree of constitutional freedom for centuries, without a word of it printed or written.

There is nothing like it in the annals of the past; and, whatever defects there were, it was the best thing liberty-loving and gifted men had given to the world. So loyal were the people, that the number of years each chief magistrate held the high office became a distinct epoch; and its anniversary quite as important, in their estimation, as to us is the recurrence of the presidential election.

It was not till 1117, under Beigthor Rafin, who summoned to his aid the ablest lawyers of the time in its preparation, that Iceland had a written constitution.

Early in the twelfth century, the most learned men began to collect and write the poems and traditions which had come down from human lips alone, in their own uncorrupted dialect. This is a strange and extraordinary thing; adhering exclusively to their own vernacular, while as a written, then a spoken language, it was fading out in those kingdoms from which it had been transplanted.

What glory for that sea-girdled, far-away country, to give to Europe the first national literature, under the earliest government which could be justly called republican! The Icelander's very weapons of combat were oftener his fertile brain, than his sword or lance or battle-axe.

The lampoon of the skald, or poet, and the bitter sarcasm, were more dreaded than weapons of steel, by the object of hate.

And, even when an injured party wanted to fight, he would publicly brand his foe "nithing," or a villain. Thus disgraced, he must wash out the stain with blood. A little story will show how they managed this matter. Two old warriors sent a challenge to two others, to meet them at a place and time designated. The day came amid one of those terrific storms that sometimes lift pedestrians from their feet. But Jökull, one of the challenged, was on the spot at the hour with nobody to fight him. He had, however, his revenge upon Finbogi, his enemy. He took a block of wood, shaped it into the resemblance of a human head, wrote on it runic letters, and, after killing a horse, opened the animal's breast, and fastened it in the wound, pointing towards the home of Fin-

bogi. This was the "nithing-post," to which the duellist resorted, to make his adversary own himself a coward, or seek a deadly meeting. The moral descendant of the heathen gentleman has only changed the battle-axe to pistols, and the "nithing-post" to "The Morning Post," or some other journal of a higher civilization.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Northmen's Oldest Book of History. — Genius in Iceland. — The Illustrious Trio. — First Printing-Press. — First School. — Bill of Students' Fare. — Study of Poetry. — Its Fabled Origin.

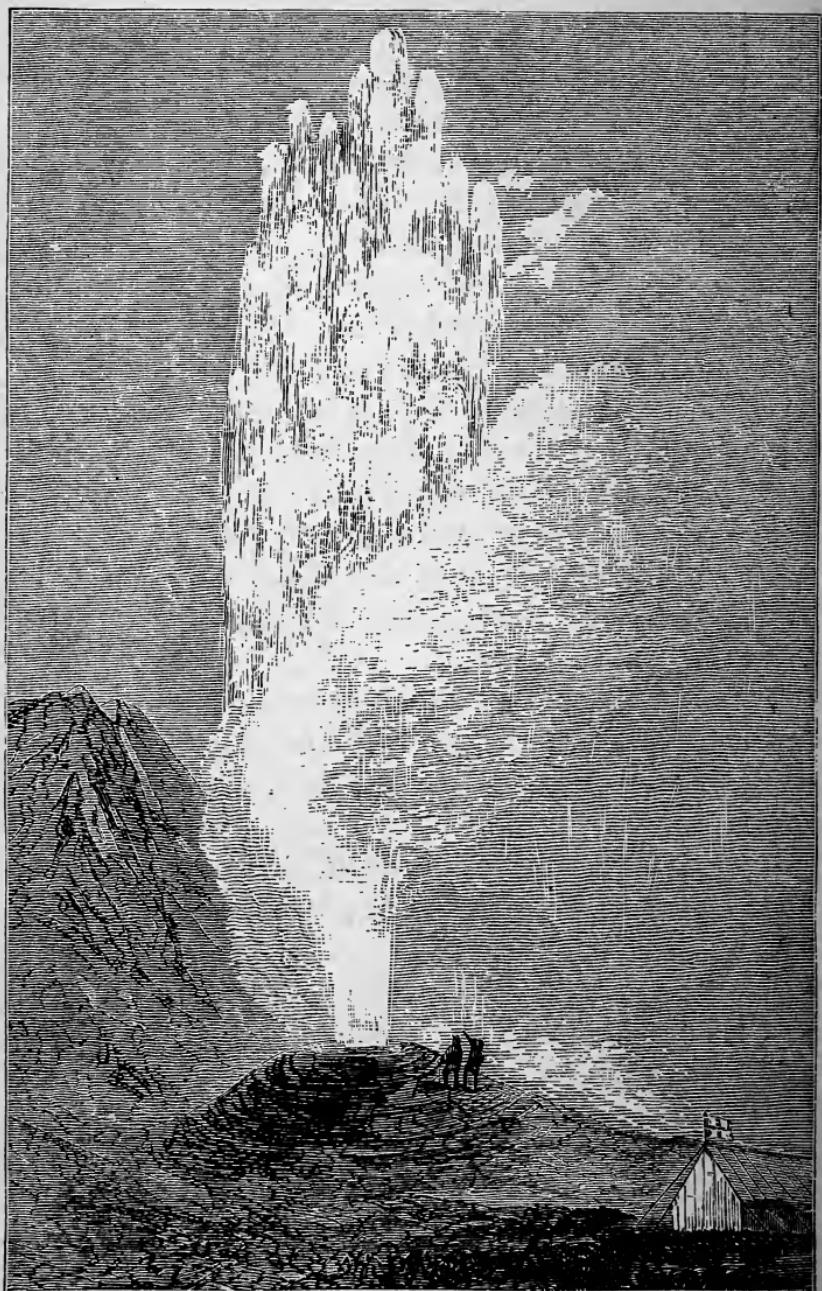
SIXTY-SEVEN years after the national council, and its great decision at Thingvalla, under the shadow of lofty jokulls near the Great Geyser, was born Ari the Wise.

Of his early life we know nothing further, nor where he is buried. His monument is the Northmen's most ancient book of history,—the Landnama-Bōk, or general annals of Iceland from its settlement, giving a full account of its real-estate operations.

Saemund the Learned, who was born in 1056, and studied theology in Germany and France, first collected and published in a volume the mythological songs he found in manuscripts, and heard from the lips of minstrel skalds. He added some of his own compositions, which have in them the leaven of that Christianity for which he had renounced the heathenism of his fathers. This was the poetic, or Elder Edda, from which the extracts on Scandinavian paganism were taken.

But the last of the grand trio of Iceland's earliest authors is Snorro Sturleson. His illustrious ances-





THE GREAT GEYSER.—Page 251.

tors went back to the fabled dynasties of Norway's royalty.

South from Reykjavik an hour's ride is Bessestad. The path is paved, as everywhere, with lava, the yawning chasms bridged with rock, and the gleaming summits leaning against the transparent sky. Bessestad was the most ancient seat of learning in Iceland. What utter seclusion! Before it is spread an oasis of grass, and behind it bleak moorland, and the ever-moaning sea. Near it is a solid and gigantic mound of upheaved lava-rock, making a near horizon, with its unchanging curve of iron.

For no green thing ever adorns it, or flower smiles upon the desolation. You are alone with memories of the ages, with Nature, and Nature's God. Here lived Snorro Sturleson.

This is the man to whom his country's history and literature are most indebted; whose great historical work justly earned for him the title of the Northern Herodotus.

He was born in the year 1178, at Kvamm, on the Kvamsfjord, a small bay on the western coast of Iceland.

His father, Sturla, was a distinguished chieftain in that part of the island; and his mother was connected, as well, with the most illustrious families of the island.

At the early age of three years, Snorro was placed under the guardianship of Jon Loptson, who inherited both the wealth and learning of his grandfather, Saemund Sigfusson.

Here young Snorro remained till twenty years of

age, and received a finished education, both in the Greek and Roman literature, and in that of his native country.

“Having access to all the manuscript and other collections of Saemund and Ari Frode, relating to the poetry, history, and mythology of the heathen north, he was placed at what might be called, in their own poetical language, the fountain of Mímir, the source of inspiration, where he might exclaim, —

‘I sat and was silent,
I saw and reflected;
I listened to that which was told.’

“On the death of his tutor, Snorro left Oddè, and married the daughter of a rich priest at Borg, on the Borgafjord, where he increased his small patrimonial inheritance with a fortune of four thousand rix dollars, a large sum for that age and country.”

By the death of his father, he added to his fortune Borg Reykholt, and other valuable estates; thus becoming, in a short time, by far the richest man on the island.

His immense wealth and genius, address and eloquence, gave him corresponding power and influence in the community.

He occasionally appeared in the Althing, or general national assembly, with a retinue of several hundred armed followers.

He made impregnable, by fortifications, his subsequent residence on the farm of Reykholt, in the midst of the wonderful volcanic region of the southwest coast. This place he also improved, and embel-

lished with useful and ornamental works, of which one only, the celebrated *Snorra-laug* (Snorro-bath), remains, after the lapse of six centuries, a proud monument of his ingenuity and munificence. The hot water for this bath is supplied from a natural fountain of boiling water, five hundred feet to the north, in a morass undermined by subterranean fires, where are many boiling springs. It is conveyed by means of an aqueduct of hewn stones, perfectly fitted together, and joined by a fine cement. The bath is circular in form, about fifteen feet in diameter, and built of hewn stones, cemented together in the same exact manner. The floor is paved with the kind of stone which composes the aqueduct, and a circular stone bench, capable of holding upwards of thirty persons, surrounds the inside of the bath.

Snorro was raised, in the year 1213, by the free choice of the people, to the position of chief magistrate of the island; in which post he was distinguished for his profound knowledge of the laws and civil institutions of his native country.

He visited Norway, where he was most honorably received by the Norwegian Jarls. The warmth of his reception was doubtless owing to the favor with which a eulogistic lay upon Hakon Galin, a Jarl of Norway, had been received in his own country, as well as by Hakon himself, to whom a copy was sent.

He composed several eulogies on the king and nobles of Norway, which procured him many rich and costly gifts from the flattered personages, also the title of *Dróttseti*, or court marshal, with the rank of *Leensmand*, or royal vassal; which last was con-

ferred in order to promote the designs which the Norwegians had conceived against the independence of Iceland.

After Snorro's return to his native country, he was involved in a labyrinth of deadly feuds, some of which he had inherited from his ancestors, and others had been kindled by his own turbulence, ambition, and avarice.

Scenes of ferocious violence followed, during which the republic was rent with contending factions; though that of Snorro, through the zeal and fidelity of his partisans, frequently gained the ascendency, thus enabling him to gratify his lofty ambition. The hatred of his enemies at length forced him to take refuge in Norway. There he was loaded with honors and favors; but, upon receiving favorable intelligence from Iceland, he obtained permission to return to his native country. As he was on the point of embarking, he received letters from the king, positively forbidding his departure. This prohibition he disregarded, and arrived safely in Iceland. Here he was again involved in fierce controversies, and shortly afterwards fell a victim to the deadly hatred of his enemies. King Hakon had sent secret instructions to Thorvaldsen, a relative of the king, who had formerly been Snorro's son-in-law and intimate friend, to seize on his person, and bring him to Norway, or to put him to death.

The latter alternative was preferred by Thorvaldsen, who was lured by revenge, and the great wealth of Snorro, to assassinate him. It is remarkable, that, though Snorro was admonished by a letter, written

in runic characters, of his danger, that neither he, who was deeply versed in this lore, nor any of his friends, could decipher this letter.

Thorvaldsen collected a band of armed men from a clan hostile to Snorro, and basely murdered him at Reikholt, on the night of the 22d of September, 1241.

Thus perished, at the age of sixty-three years, Snorro Sturleson, illustrious by his birth, his talents, and attainments; but, according to the concurrent testimony of his contemporaries, stained with unprincipled ambition, avarice, faithlessness, and every other vice that dishonors and degrades human nature.

The bald-monks in convents had locked up only a few works in "poor Latin," when Snorro gave to Iceland and the Continent the flowing sentences of his fascinating annals. But his greatest work was the Younger Edda, which contains the whole system of mythology.

He reminds us of Lord Bacon in the possession of rarest abilities and attainments, yet poisoned with a selfish ambition, which led to a tragical death, and left his splendid genius and attainments under its enduring eclipse.

About the title Edda, there is some dispute among the learned; the prevailing opinion being, that it is figurative in its use, from the old Norse, which means *great-grandmother*.

The Edda, then, is the venerable mother of Icelandic literature. The Elder Edda is a collection of thirty-nine poems, principally upon the mythology of the Northmen. The oldest and most interesting of these is the "Song of the Prophetess;" of which,

in the chapter on the gods and worship of the sea-rovers, a good illustration was given.

The period of the old literature ended about the era of the Reformation, from which dates the modern. For more than a century succeeding A. D. 1400, scarcely any thing in prose appeared.

The very first specimen of modern Icelandic literature was the translation of the New Testament, A. D. 1540, followed by Hymns and Psalms, and then the entire Bible. With the closing century, a fresh historical literature dawned brightly upon the island.

In poetry, the first creation, and the "flower of Icelandic poetry, was the *PASSIU-SÀLMAR*, or fifty Passion Hymns, by Hallgrím Peturson, who was born in 1614, and died 1674." Thirty editions have been printed. The *Höla-bök* of the people was the Hymn Book of the Reformation. Eight popular poets followed at intervals; the last of whom, Sigurd Breidfjörd, died in 1846. Of living poets, we shall have beautiful effusions in the closing chapter on the Great Millennial Jubilee. Harmes Frimsson in 1794-6 published, in two volumes, a work for children, with the title of *Kvöldvökur*, or *Wakeful Evenings*.

During these centuries of Iceland's prosperity, flocks and herds increased, fisheries prospered, and ships laden with wadmal (a coarse cloth), furs, skins, oil, tallow, fish, and eider-down, were sent to England and Norway, bringing back meal, timber, steel, fine cloths, and carpets.

Icelandic tourists visited the capitals of distant

kingdoms, sometimes extending their travels to Constantinople and Palestine. They were "lionized" on their return, and were central figures in all social gatherings, rehearsing to eager listeners the story of their adventures.

Among the volcanic ruins of Iceland, during its greatest prosperity, nearly one hundred thousand people, it is supposed, were living ; with more than half a million of sheep, fifty thousand horses, and nearly as many oxen. Now, probably, not over two-thirds of these numbers are upon the island.

An old galley, in the summer of 1530, bore the first printing-press to Iceland, introduced by the Bishop of Hoolum, on the northern border of the island. The types were of wood, and rude enough, — an awkward machine for making thought visible ; but it was the dawn of the power of the press, upon that land so worthy of its rising glory. This bishop a score of years later, with his son, were beheaded for crimes attending violent opposition to the Reformation. This form of execution became the legal one, but has for a long time ceased to be employed, because no one could be found on the island to accept the office of executioner. The successor of Arc, a man of greater culture, purchased new presses, and made others with his own hands from these models.

Iceland, therefore, has the additional honor of manufacturing one of the first presses in Northern Europe, and the very first by consecrated hands.

Iceland's earliest Christian school for classical culture is said to have been Haudkadir, near the Great Geyser, where Saemund studied, who afterwards es-

tablished a similar institution at Oddi. To this last fact some trace the name of Edda. Bishop Isleif opened the third at Skalhold in 1105. This group of cottages has figured on the maps as the capital of Iceland. There was another school established at Holar, in connection with its cathedral. Next Reykjavik became the seat of learning, which was transferred to Bessestad, and finally removed to the capital, where it now remains.

Without describing the narrow, close commons for the young men, we copy only two days' bill of fare ; enough to prove conclusively that they were not hindered in their studies by excessive indulgence in the good things of the table.

On Sunday morning, before the students went to church, they had a light lunch, as an exception to the usual two meals per day. The diet doubtless has not very much changed. At mid-day : first course, stock-fish and butter ; second course, meat-broth, but, if this cannot be had, peas with meat. In the evening (which in winter is several hours after dark) : first, stock-fish and butter ; second, barley-water grout, with milk and butter. Saturday, mid-day : stock-fish and butter ; warm sausages. Evening : stock-fish and butter ; curd with milk.

The study of poetry, the youth were required to pursue, however prosy their own mental taste. The *theory*, if not the practice, of the divine art, must be mastered.

Very singular is the mythological origin of this gift ! Two warrior-gods made treaty by spitting into a common receptacle, and its contents formed the

the wisest of men. He was slain by two dwarfs, who from his blood, and honey, created the divine elixir. This Odin got by finding the cave in which it was secreted, and, changing into a worm, crept in by a hole made through the connivance of the fair keeper ; then changed his form to that of an eagle, and flew away with the treasure drawn into his bill. And so it is the “gift of the gods.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

Music. — Education in Common Life. — Preamble of Public Address. — Modern Authors. — The Lord's Prayer in 1585 and in 1874. — National Suicide. — The Reformation.

NATIVE Icelandic music is embalmed in sacred tunes, whose manuscripts are preserved in private libraries. The art was once taught upon the island.

They have, too, an original instrument still found in inland homes. It is the langspiel, slightly resembling a guitar lying edgewise, having three brass-wire strings, played by bow and fingers. The tones, at a distance, are not unlike those of a piano.

Although music and poetry are less cultivated than formerly by the Icelanders, both are yet strikingly visible in their national life and literature.

On public occasions their ascriptions of praise still sound forth with great power, always with the undertone of that solemnity inspired by every thing around them. It is not singular, therefore, that sacred poetry should be in the ascendant among such a people. Their compositions of this kind would make a small library; among which David and Paul are inspiring themes.

We may have one of the pleasant surprises common to tourists in Iceland, if we call upon the

weather-beaten fisherman, Zoega, whose little boat rocks upon the waves, while he drops his line for hours together, amid storm and sunshine, to secure a scanty supply of food for his lava-sheltered family. We cannot speak Icelandic ; so Zoega tries the purest Latin : if he fails here, he may resort to Greek, certainly to Danish, or some other modern tongue. Or pause before that smithy, where another plain, poor man hammers out, in small jobs, his livelihood. His salutation is in elegant Latin. These are literal descriptions of interviews with men whose dress and surroundings form a contrast seen only in Iceland. What they know of our English literature is learned mainly through the Danish and German tongues, in which are read Milton, Addison, Pope, Young, and other standard authors.

For some centuries past, it has been customary among the Icelanders, during the period of any great volcanic eruption, to appoint a day of united prayer and supplication. This was first done in the northern parts of the island in 1477, when a general assembly of the inhabitants of the district was convened. The following is the preamble to the address, preserved in old Latin, in their archives :—

“ In the name of God, amen ! On the first day of March (the last month of winter), in the year of the Lord 1477, the clergy and laity who lived between Vargaa and Gleraa assembled at Grund in Eyafjord, and there held a conference concerning the terror-inspiring wonders which were troubling the people in those days ; to wit, the fires bursting forth, the sand and ashes which had fallen and been spread far

and wide, the darkness, and the dreadful hissings. On account of these portents, the flocks and herds had been robbed of their food, though the earth was free from snow.

“The assembly agreed that surely this had happened to punish the sins and misdoings of men; wherefore they all thought that they should seek favor and pity where these graces abound,—with God himself, so that he should will to turn away from them the consequences of his anger. They promised, therefore, that they would not seek further to avert his punishments in this world; and, that he might not close the kingdom of heaven to them, they declared their choice that God, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, he who willed those things which were best, should be their protector for time present and time to come. First they paid their vows to the all-powerful God.”

To those who are curious to see how little change the centuries have made in the language, we quote the Icelandic Lord’s Prayer in 1585, and also in 1874:—

LORD’S PRAYER IN 1585.

“Fader vor, trú sem ert á himnum. Helgist thitt nafn. Tilkome thitt ríke. Verde thinn vilie, so á jördhu sem á himne. Gief oss í dag vort dagligh braudh. Og fyrerlát oss vorar skullder, so sem vier fyrerlátum vorum skulldunautum. Og innleidh oss ecke í freistne. Heldur frelsa trú oss frá illu, thyiat thitt er ríkit, mátturenn og dýrdhen um allder allda. Amen.”

LORD'S PRAYER IN 1874.

"Fadir vor, þú sem ert á himnum. Helgist thitt nafn. Tilkommi thitt ríki. Verdi thinn vilji, svo á jördum sem a himni. Gef þú oss í dag vort daglegt braud. Og fyrirgef oss vorar skuldir, svo sem vjer og fyrer-gefum vorum skuldnautum. Og leid oss ekki i freistni. Helldur frelsa oss frá illu; thvíad thitt er ríked og mátturinn og dýrdin um aldir alda. Amen."

The progress of neighboring nations, during the centuries, very greatly changed the relative importance and pre-eminence of Iceland; and "the flame which was again kindled among the people shone dimly beneath the splendors of the sun of science which had now risen over the kingdoms of Europe."

Among the new and splendid lights which appeared during this period, was Gudbrand Thorlakson, Bishop of Holar. He completed his education at Copenhagen; and among his intimate friends was the famous astronomer Tycho Brahe. His bishopric extended over fifty-six years; and his devotion to educational interests, including the printing establishments, was unwearied. Nearly one hundred works were written and published by him. He gave his people the first translation of the entire Bible in their own tongue, and also published the Icelandic code of laws.

Among modern authors, Assessor Benedik Grondal, judge in the higher court over half a century since, published a large number of translations and original poems; his elegant satires on the vices and

follies of his countrymen being suppressed by a law forbidding the lampooning, which was so dreaded a weapon of revenge in olden times.

Chief-Justice Stephenson, president, sixty years ago, of a literary society, would eclipse the majority of writers in any land, in the variety and scholarly character of his works. We add the titles of a few of his twenty volumes: "Treatise on Meteors," "Amusements for Friends," "Volcanic Eruptions," "Hymns and Psalms for Churches," "Treatise on Fusé," "Treatise on Cattle and Horses."

To the cathedral, as it is called, at Holar, in the northern district, an elaborately-sculptured baptismal font was presented by the family of Thorwaldsen in memoriam of the great artist, who was a native of the island. It has been removed to the church at Reykjavik.

Among his countrymen, there has been nothing to stimulate and develop sculpture and painting; nor could materials for either be had without an expense quite beyond their limited means, with few exceptions.

That far-reaching religious revolution, set in motion by Luther, reached Iceland from Denmark early in the sixteenth century. Christian III., who had made Lutheran Christianity the national religion of his realm, determined to extend the blessing to his provinces. He was resisted by the priesthood, among whom Areson, Bishop of Holar, organized an armed force, and was beheaded with his sons.

After his death, in 1550, the Lutheran Church became the national form of Protestant worship in Ice-

land. A new life was breathed into the nation, and learning received a fresh impulse.

Iceland has modestly waited long for her high place in the regard of scholars, but her day dawns apace. Writes our republican poet-laureate, H. W. Longfellow, —

“ The Icelandic language is as remarkable as the Anglo-Saxon for its abruptness, its obscurity, and the boldness of its metaphors. Poets are called Songsmiths; poetry, the Language of the Gods; gold, the Daylight of Dwarfs; the heavens, the Skull of Ymer; the rainbow, the Bridge of the Gods; a battle, a Bath of Blood, the Hail of Odin, the Meeting of Shields; the tongue, the Sword of Words; river, the Sweat of Earth, the Blood of the Valleys; arrows, the Daughters of Misfortune, the Hailstones of Helmets; the earth, the Vessel that floats on the Ages; the sea, the Field of Pirates; a ship, the Skate of Pirates, the Horse of the Waves. The ancient skald (bard) smote the strings of his harp with as bold a hand as the Berserk smote his foe. When heroes fell in battle, he sang to them in his Drapa, or death-song, that they had gone to drink ‘divine mead in the secure and tranquil palaces of the gods,’ in that Valhalla upon whose walls stood the watchman Heimdal, whose ear was so acute that he could hear the grass grow in the meadows of earth, and the wool on the backs of sheep. He lived in a credulous age,—in the dim twilight of the past. He was

‘The skylark in the dawn of years,
The poet of the morn.’

In the vast solitudes of Norway, the heart of Nature beat against his own. From the midnight gloom of groves, the deep-voiced pines answered the deeper-voiced and neighboring sea. To his ear these were not the voices of dead, but living things. Demons rode the ocean like a weary steed, and the gigantic pines flapped their sounding wings to smite the spirit of the storm.

“ Still wilder and fiercer were these influences of Nature in desolate Iceland, than on the mainland of Scandinavia. Fields of lava, icebergs, geysers, and volcanoes, were familiar sights. When the long winter came, and the snowy Hecla roared through the sunless air, and the flames of the northern aurora flashed along the sky like phantoms from Valhalla, the soul of the poet was filled with images of terror and dismay. He bewailed the death of Baldr, the sun, and saw in each eclipse the horrid form of the wolf Managamer, who swallowed the moon, and stained the sky with blood.”

Lossing says, “ It is back to the Norwegian vikings we must look for the hardiest elements of progress in the United States.”

The Howitts of England enthusiastically declare, “ There is nothing, besides the Bible, which sits in a divine tranquillity of unapproachable nobility, like a king of kings amongst all other books, and the poem of Homer itself, which can compare, in all the elements of greatness, with the Edda. There is a loftiness of stature, and a growth of muscle, about it, which no poets of the same race have ever since reached. The obscurity which hangs over some

parts of it, like the deep shadows crouching 'mid the ruins of the past, is probably the result of dilapidations ; but amid this stand forth the boldest masses of intellectual masonry. Springing from the old Norse of far-off time, surrounded by the densest shadows of forgotten ages, we come at once into the midst of gods and heroes, goddesses and fair women, giants and dwarfs, moving about in a world of wonderful construction."

The great German poet Schlegel, after giving the highest place to Iceland's earliest literary productions, adds, " The spiritual veneration for Nature, to which the sensual Greek was an entire stranger, gushes forth in their mysterious language and prophetic traditions, with a full tide of enthusiasm and inspiration, sufficient to endure for centuries, and to supply a whole race of future bards and poets with a precious and animating elixir."

Writes Laing in his " *Heimskringla* : " " For all that men hope for good of government, and future improvement in their physical and moral condition ; all that civilized men enjoy at this day of civil, religious, and political liberty, — representative legislation, the trial by jury, security of property, freedom of mind and person, the influence of public opinion over the conduct of public affairs, the Reformation, the liberty of the press, the spirit of the age, — all that is or has been of value to man in modern times, as a member of society, either in Europe or in the New World, may be traced to the spark left burning on our shores by those northern barbarians." Adds Commander C. S. Forbes, R. N., " As for the much-

vaunted pre-eminence of the Anglo-Saxon race among the moderns, in intellect and in arms, which has passed into a stereotyped platitude with many of our countrymen,—why, the English branch of that race was as socially and morally degenerate, and as devoid of spirit and nationality, as its present direct representatives, the Germans, are at this moment, until the irruption of the cognate branch of Norse into our island, between the ninth and twelfth centuries; whose descendants, inheriting that precious viking energy, have since sown the earth with colonies."

Other scholarly writers tell us, "The ancestors (at least morally) of Raleigh and Nelson, and Kane and Farragut, appear among these sea-rovers, whose passion was danger and venture on the waters. Here, too, among such men as the 'Raven Floke,' is the prototype of those American pioneers who follow the wild birds into pathless wildernesses to found new republics. *And it is the Norse 'udal' property, not the European feudal property, which is the model for the American descendants of the ancient Norsemen.*

"Here we have no dissolute Pantheon, with gods revelling eternally in earthly vices, and the evils and wrongs of humanity continued forever. Gods and men die in the heat of the conflict; and there survives alone Baldur, the 'God of Love,' who shall create a new heaven and a new earth.

"While German literature darkens under the malignant star of Deutschthum; while French art, sickening of its long disease, crawls like a leper through the light and wholesome world; while all

over the European Continent one wan influence or another asserts its despair-engendering sway over books and men,—whither shall a bewildered student fly for one deep breath of pure air and wholesome ozone?

“ Turn northward, traversing the great valleys of Scandinavia, and not halting until you look upon ‘that slowly heaving Polar Ocean, over which, in the utmost north, the great sun hangs low.’ ”

Suicide has been the epitaph of fallen nations. Iceland is no exception. The old Scandinavian blood, which chafed against any restraint or rivalry in political or social importance and power, lost none of its fire during three and a half centuries of freedom. Deadly feuds, largely instigated and kept alive by Norway, wearied the nation, and created a feeling bordering on desperation.

In 1261, aided by Snorro Sturleson, a favorite at the Norwegian court, where he resided two years, Iceland gave her glory to another. The eastern portion, and, three years after, the western, quietly passed under the shadow of Hacon’s throne; a shadow whose blight was imperceptible at first, but sure in its ultimate work.

The people gave no visible signs of the great and bloodless change to the condition of dependence. They cherished educational institutions, and enjoyed general prosperity; but Thingvalla’s walls echoed no longer to the eloquence of freemen, acknowledging no sovereignty outside of their island-republic.

We can only speculate upon the possible effect, in saving Iceland from hopeless decline, of a more vigor-

ous Christianity, unenfeebled by union with the state, which created and has preserved the American Republic for a century, and, if made controlling, will perpetuate it while governments exist.

In the loss of power from this exhaustless source of re-enforcement, and quickening of all life, including the individual and public conscience, depressing conditions were the more influential; and the ancient spirit of independence, whose original lawlessness and rivalries were its inspiration, declined. The people "yielded the more easily to the encroachments first of Norway, and then of Denmark, upon the rights at first reserved for themselves. The latter gradually disappeared, or were so curtailed that they barely continued to exist in form; and about the year 1660 the island virtually lost every vestige of independence. Denmark's rule was absolute, and there was no appeal from it. Even the few traders appointed by the Danish government for the island, and allowed the entire monopoly of its commerce, were Danes, not Icelanders. The people grew steadily poorer, and powerless in proportion to their poverty.

This state of things lasted, with slight variations, for nearly two centuries."

As many have had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with Iceland's national religion, whose name is derived from the gifted and heroic leader in the great Reformation, it may interest them to read a brief outline of public worship, and the general status of the denomination.

The "Augsburg Confession" drawn up by Me-

lanchon, and approved by Luther, has been, and is, the acknowledged standard of doctrine. The membership, in this country alone, is nearly half a million, with two thousand clergymen. They have a liturgy; and the clergy, in their official duties, wear a robe, usually black. "The Church Year," with its great festivals, is kept. The hymns are sung by all the people, with organ accompaniment. The hymnology of the Lutheran Church surpasses that of all other churches in the world in sweetness, richness, power, and unction. Even in their English dress, there are few hymns more beautiful or soul-inspiring than Luther's "A mighty Fortress is our God," or "O Head so bruised and wounded!" or "Jerusalem the Golden."

CHAPTER XXIV.

An Excursion to the Guldbringè Syssel, or Goldbringing District. — The Outfit. — Bessestad. — Boiling Springs. — An Unexplained Wonder. — Guldbringè Syssel. — Stappen. — Reykholt. — Scenes along Paths of Travel.

IT is six o'clock in the morning ; and yonder, at an easy pace which says, "I never hurry," comes the guide towards the only hotel at the capital, with his "shaggy cavalcade." And at last in earnest commences the packing away of tents, food, &c., upon the baggage-horses, whose number depends on the variety and quantity of those articles. These white, black, mottled, and intelligent animals cost from ten to thirty dollars each ; for the tourist usually buys to sell again when done with them. Such saddles ! they are seen nowhere else. Square pieces of spongy turf from the bogs are tied on the backs by a rope ; and on them is fastened a piece of wood fitted to the place. The ends project, with pegs in each, on which with woollen cords the load is hung. It is a nice operation to balance the burdens, and seldom done so well, that before travelling far they do not require re-adjustment.

When all is ready, the animals are tied together head to tail, to prevent separation, and getting astray. At night, to keep them near the encampment, their

heads and tails are tied together, forming a living ring of horse-flesh and tangled extremities.

Away they scamper tandem, at the crack of their master's whip along the foot-highway. A harness never fetters their free motions, nor does the sound of carriage-wheels ever drown the noise of their iron-shod hoofs.

The intelligence of the ponies is not only seen in the almost superhuman caution on perilous roads, but, when he makes a tangent from the way, "Ho, ho!" from the guide, brings the wanderer back. But it is understood between him and his master, that when they reach a stopping-place, if the reins are left upon his neck, he is at liberty to wander at will for pasture: if thrown on the grass, he does not venture out of sight; it is as if he had heard his rider say, "Pony, I shall want you shortly; don't go away." The patient animal stands, it may be, weary and hungry, waiting for his burden again.

Every man in Iceland is his own blacksmith, and carries with him on long journeys the plain, simple shoes and nails, fitting them as they are needed.

Six miles northward, through the wildest possible region of rocks, thrown into "all sorts of fantastic forms," making yawning chasms and caverns, the path leads to Havnifjord, sheltered by vast parallel ledges of rock, once destroying streams of fire.

The next town is ancient Bessestad, where, for many years, was Iceland's only seat of learning, afterward removed to Reykjavik. No college in our own land makes a greater display of classical lore on examination-day than did famous Bessestad.

A few miles beyond it, many years ago, a travelling party stumbled upon the bones and clothes, strewed around on the rocks, of a woman lost twelve months before, and of whom no tidings had been heard. The eagles and foxes had entirely consumed the flesh.

There is a boiling spring not far distant, under a natural dome, where the cottagers in that part of the valley cook their food. What a saving in fuel, and in the getting and handling of water !

But we are not done with wonders in the vales of Reykholt. A mile farther, and there is one unrivalled in the world. From the face of a rock rising twenty feet, and a hundred and fifty in length, burst sixteen boiling springs, two of which, during the ages, have played at hide-and-seek.

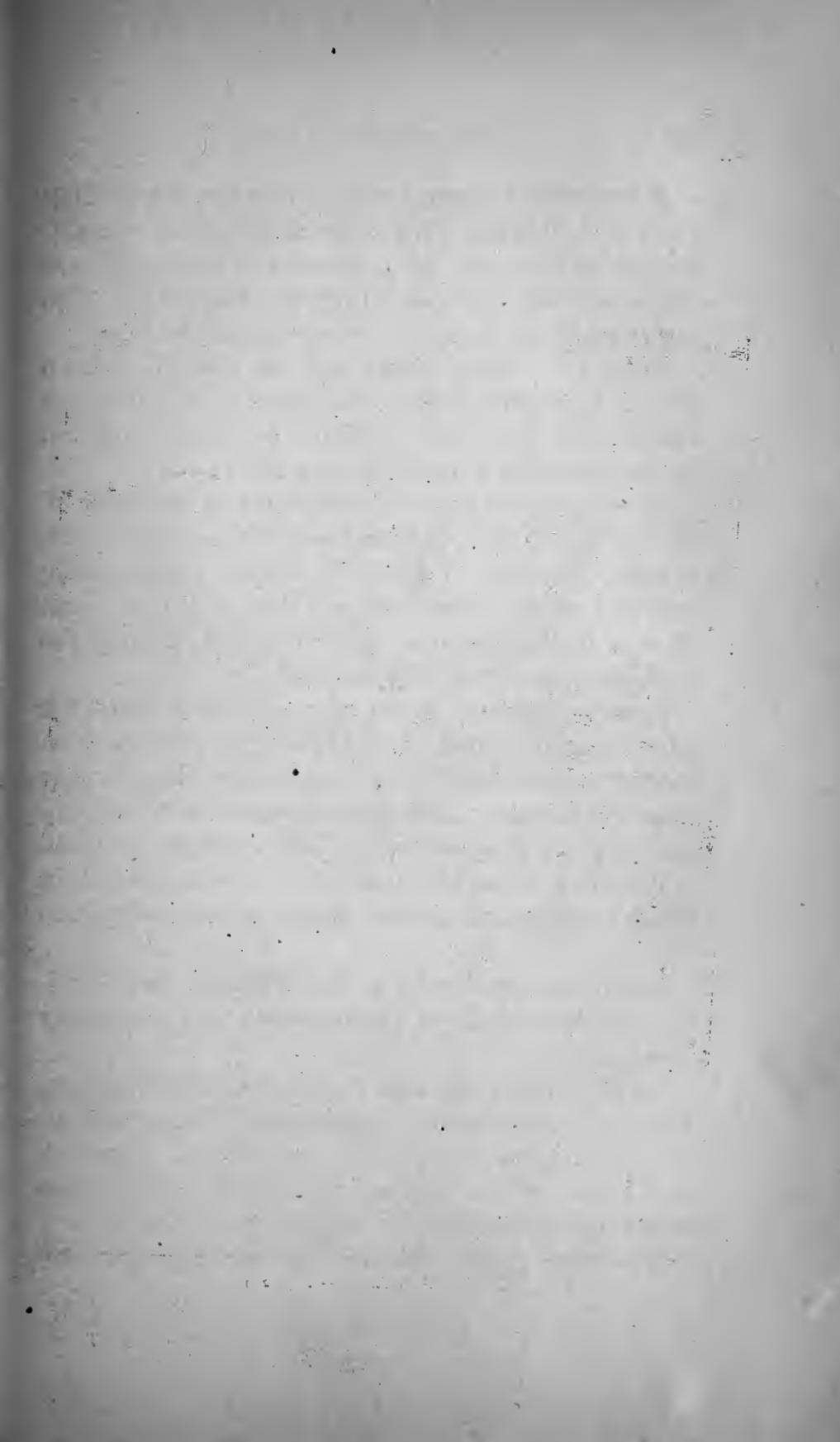
From an opening, shoots up a column of water for a few moments, then suddenly is gone ; when from another orifice a similar jet, but smaller, immediately rises into the air. And thus at regular intervals, unceasingly, do these streams of hot water rise and fall.

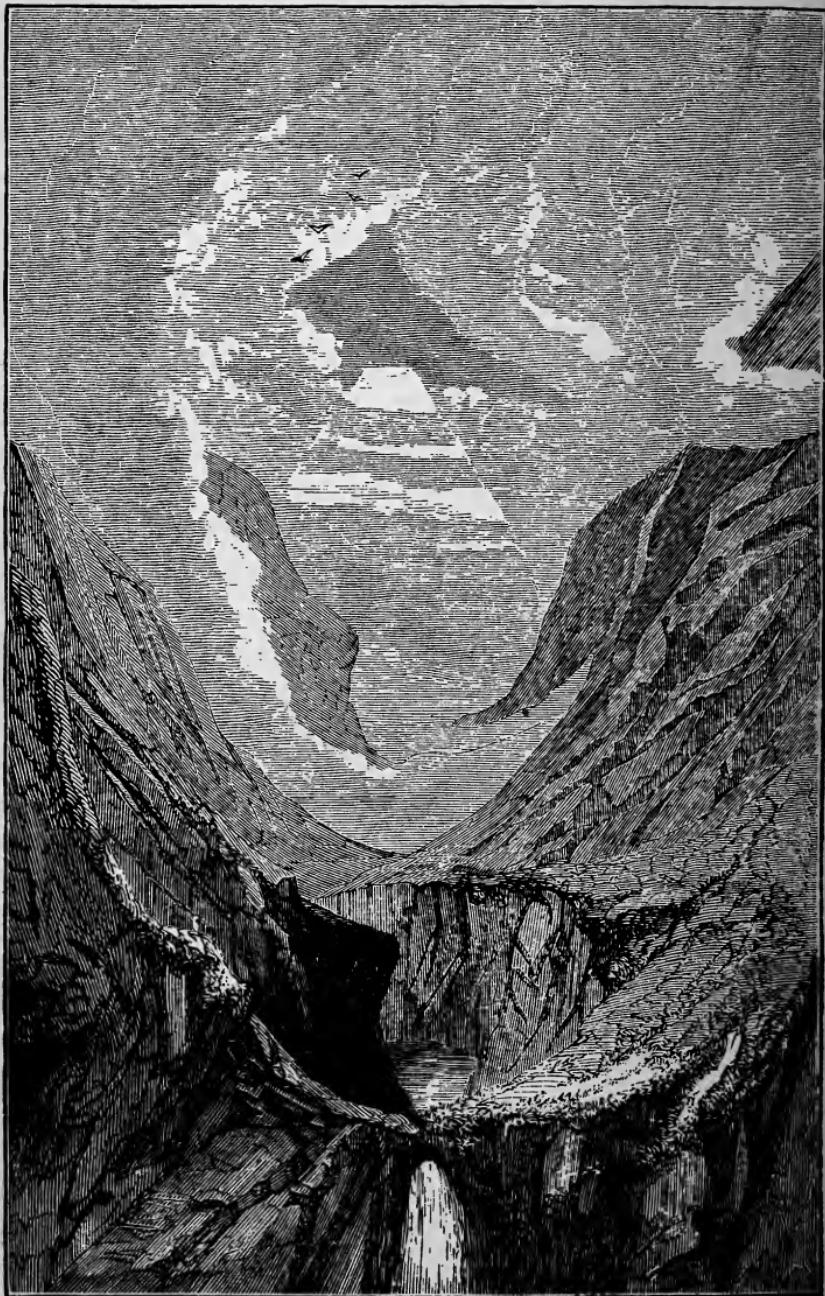
We know of no explanation of a performance in which a system of natural valves seems indispensable.

Boiling springs border at intervals the way, sending up white clouds of incense upon the startlingly silent air.

At Krisuvik is the well-known Sulphur Mountain, whose slope is a grand manufactory of the article of commerce after which it is named ; a steaming, crystal-frosted, mud-boiling laboratory, equal to the wants of the world in the staple it produces.

The most gifted observer has no language ade-





CRATER-CHASM. — Page 239.

quate to portray the “wonders and terrors of this place. The sensations of a person even of firm nerves, standing on a support which feebly sustains him, over an abyss, where, literally, fire and brimstone are in dreadful and incessant action ; before tremendous proofs of what is going on beneath him ; enveloped in thick vapors ; his ear stunned with thundering noises, — these can hardly be expressed in words.” Krisuvik lies on the south side.

Guldbringè Syssel, or Gold-bringing, because of its fisheries, as may be seen on any map of the island, stretches far out into the sea, south-west of Reykjavik, and terminating in Cape Reykianes.

North of it, and running farther into the ocean, is the peninsula whose remarkable extremity is the grand Snaefell Jokull. Its northern shore is quite unlike the scenery of Guldbringè. A valley, which spreads from the sea to Mount Esian, is level, and green with verdure. An hour’s travel, and we reach Saubar, from whose parish register we have copied a page of the pastor’s memoranda. At Leira, a neighboring parish, was formerly the headquarters of a literary society, whose printing-office was here.

Farther along the coast is Stapskape, with its marvellous columnar rocks, bearing some resemblance to our own Palisades on the Hudson, caverns not unlike Fingal’s Cave, and immense arches of the same lava-granite. In the clear air looms ice-crowned Snaefell Jokull. Few feet have ever attempted to scale it, and none ever crossed the awful chasm guarding its crest for a hundred feet below.

The immense bog-lands occasionally seen are pecu-

liar to Iceland, whether wet or dry. From the surface of the land, like small bundles of straw standing endwise, are scattered miniature mounds, covered with fine grass. These are not *growths*, but thrown up by the action of the frost; and consequently, if any are removed, likely to be restored again.

We stand at the entrance of the wonderful valley of Reykholt. More columns than the eye can distinguish of vapor slowly ascend in the perspective. Advancing along the valley, first from a platform of lava, through several apertures the boiling water is thrown, warning the incautious traveller to keep at a safe distance from all but the smallest jets of the caldron below. Still farther, a massive rock ten feet high, and about forty long, stands in the middle of a rushing river; and from its highest point furiously dashes upward a steaming column. Near it, from the bed of the stream itself, issue springs of boiling water.

It is sabbath day at Reykholt, Aug. 21; and without a cloud on the intense blue, since soon after the "noon of night" the sun has been moving along his high arctic curve, flooding the landscape, whose "very volcanic agencies seem to relax their energies, as their steam-columns languidly rise towards the heavens, beckoning the scattered inhabitants of this wild valley to direct their thoughts above, with more solemnity than the sound of the village bell. Even the cattle, as if conscious of the day, relinquish their rich pastures by the river's bank, and, collected in a group at the entrance of the 'tún,' appear to enjoy more perfectly at their ease the rare rays of the resplendent morning.

“Files of mounted peasants and their children, dressed in holiday best, are now threading their way from the neighboring farms, and converging to the church; where, on their arrival, they tether their ponies, and cluster around the entrance, awaiting the appearance of the pastor.”

A suggestive link, indeed, are these “motley cavalcades,” between a past generation and the present, including, as they do, all ages, from the sleeping infant, to the aged grandmother, sitting astride her pony, his bushy tail and mane flying in all directions. Silver belts, gilt buttons and breastpins, below the fantastic head-dress, reflect the sunbeams that fall amid the sabbath stillness. Yonder he comes, with tottering step,—the dear old pastor, the venerable patriarch of the valley, attended by three clergymen from adjoining parishes, to assist him in the services his own strength is insufficient to perform. Saluting each member of his flock, he passes into the hushed sanctuary, and the anthem of praise floats out upon the slumbering air. It is eleven o’clock; and, until nearly one, worship is rendered to Him who is never confused nor deceived by the manifold dialects and forms of homage, in the same pure Norse that invoked the smiles of Odin a thousand years ago.

It was no trivial compliment paid by the French Abbé Bernard, at the trading-station of Grundar Fiord in Snaefells Syssel, when he said to an English tourist, “*Ils sont si bêtes;*” that is to say, no impression could be made upon the natives. During a two-years’ residence, not a convert had been made to the Romish faith, abjured three centuries before.

A short ride from Reykholt towards Grundar Fiord is Bulandshofdi Pass, which is along the almost perpendicular side of a promontory rising two thousand feet from the ocean-surf. The fearful magnificence of this narrow pathway, the precipice towering a thousand feet above and below, cannot be surpassed.

The awe-inspiring sublimity of such desolate heights, often splintered and turreted, which stand like swarthy giants upon the shores that encircle Iceland, is peculiar to it; and although destitute of verdure, or Scottish glens smiling in their fastness, they leave an impression unsurpassed in vividness and power by any other coast-views, unless Jan Mayen, which but few eyes have ever beheld, be an exception.

Whatever direction is taken towards the interior, there bursts on the view continually, “some new wonder in the unearthly landscape.” Sometimes it will be a grassy plain lying in a horse-shoe range of parti-colored hills; beyond which, nearly encircling it, is another line of heights, black, red, and yellow, making the “fire-moulded circle seem weird and impassable. But, doubling the horn, there succeeds a rampart of green hills, opening into glens, gorges, and plains, beyond which is moorland watered by rivers and silvery lakes. Here and there, rise volumes of sulphur vapor and steam, from the slopes, and even the surface, of swiftly flowing streams. In the distance, rises grandly a lofty fell or jokull, burying its crown in a cloud, or gleaming in the sun.”

We have a fine illustration of the peculiar fascina-

tion of the most desolate portions of Iceland, in the finished sketches by Mr. Bryce, an English tourist, of an excursion there in the summer of 1872.

The picture we copy is from the side washed by the Arctic Sea.

“ We reached a high, undulating plateau, strewn with loose, rough slabs of stone, like the pavement of a ruined city, with here and there sheets of black water, too small for lakes, too big for pools ; patches of bog, and beds of half-thawed snow. The slowly rising clouds showed all round the same country, a land without form and void, a land that seemed as if only half-created, with no feature for the eye to dwell upon ; neither peaks nor valleys, neither rocks nor grass, but everywhere bare, bleak, blank desolation. It was not always the same, for sometimes there was more snow, sometimes bog, sometimes only stone ; but one had no sense of progress in it, and felt as if it might go on forever. Late in the afternoon, the stone changed to a rolling plain of black volcanic pebbles ; and, coming at last to an oasis of short grass, we halted to give the horses a feed, though a scanty one, and to discuss our course ; for the clouds had now settled down upon us, and there was no seeing more than a few hundred yards in any direction. Track, or mark to indicate a track, there was of course none.

“ Next morning early, when we again mounted, and started, unrefreshed, upon our way, every thing was still wrapped in cloud. About nine o’clock, however, the mist suddenly rose, and then vanished ; the sun shone out, and the wished-for jokull appeared, a

long, flat-topped, smooth-sloped ridge of ice, four or five miles to the east of us, trending away south farther than eye could reach. So the way was now plain ; and we rode on as fast as the roughness of the ground permitted, where flats covered with the overflow of glacier torrents alternated with rocky or shingly hills, and with the iron billows of successive lava-flows. The scene was unlike yesterday's, as drear and solitary, but with a certain weird splendor of its own ; on one side, the smooth, endless line of snow-field ; on the other, an immense plain, flooded with sunlight, with a few tiny volcanic cones rising on its extreme western marge ; right in front, two bold, snowy mountain groups, the square mass of Lang Jokull, and opposite it five sharp icy pinnacles capping the ridge of Blángny Jokull ; between them a depression, through which we were to pass to the south, and which, so clear was the air, seemed no nearer at six o'clock, after incessant quick riding, than when we had caught sight of it before noon.

“ The unfruitful sea is not more lonely or more waste than this wilderness, shut in by frozen barriers. Yet it was not a howling wilderness, such as that which awes a child's imagination in the Hebrew prophets, such as that we had traversed the day before ; but full of a strange, stern beauty, stilling the soul with the stillness of nature. There was not a cloud in the sky, not a bird, not an insect, not a floweret at our feet ; only the blue dome of air raining down brightness on the black desert floor, the dazzling snows in front, and far away exquisite tints of distance upon the western peaks. And then the

silence, what was ever like it? a silence, not as of death, but as of a time before life was. To us, the scene was all the more solemn because of yesterday's cloud, and the weary night; for there was nothing to connect what we now saw with the region we had left on the northern side of the desert; we could no more tell how we had got there than how we should get out. It was like a leap into fairy-land, and, indeed, despite our exhaustion, a delicious leap, for the air was so fine and keen, the sky so brilliant, the aspect of every thing so novel, that the barrenness underfoot, and the sense of danger in case any misfortune befell us so far from human help, did not seem to depress us; and each rode alone in a sort of grave exhilaration, gazing as in a dream at the hills, and drinking in the sunlight, content with silence and the present.

“The sun went down as we entered the majestic, sand-strewn portal between the two jokulls; and the eastern one, on whose snows his light lingered longest, glowed with colors more glorious than any we could remember in the Alps; the rose, perhaps, less vivid than that which burns at dawn upon the Silberhorn, but with it an infinitely varied and tender alternation of violet and purple, opal and pink and orange, passing from one tint to another in swift iridescent pulses till they died away into chilly blue. Darkness had hardly descended before what had seemed a steel-gray bank of cloud in the north-east turned to an auroral arch, which soon shot forth its streamers across the zenith, throbbing and glancing from one side of heaven to the other, and flinging

themselves into exuberant folds and curves of vaporous light.

“ When the saffron robe of morning was spread over the east, we were among new mountains, with the pass already far away ; and when from behind one of their pinnacles the sun suddenly flamed up, we were descending towards the Great White Lake Kvitevatn), one of the largest in the country, over whose bosom two glaciers streaming down between savage, ink-black cliffs, scattered a shower of miniature icebergs, that sailed about, sparkling in the morning light.”

Krossholm, in Northern Iceland, received its name from a cross raised on the highest summit, along the beautiful valley of Hvam, by the widow of Baldur the Rich, a sea-rover, who, having embraced Christianity abroad, introduced it there. After his death and festival obsequies, she erected the sacred symbol ; which, after she died, was removed, and a heathen temple erected on the very spot where it stood.

In this connection, we are reminded that the most memorable domestic festivals were the funeral feasts, which were sometimes on a grand scale, attended by many hundreds of guests, and continued several days. It is related, that, at Hjalke’s death, fourteen hundred persons kept this Viking “ wake.” A man of wealth named And, when he knew death was near, made a magnificent feast, distributing his property to his heirs, and presents to his friends.

It was a custom sacredly regarded to have the eyes of the dead closed by the nearest of kin.

CHAPTER XXV.

Excursions among the Mountains, and along the Coast.—The Geyser.—Uncomplaining Resignation.—The Strokr.

THE route from Thingvalla to the Geysers, travelled by Hooker in 1809, was a very dangerous one, much of the way lying between frightful chasms, and over fragments of rock, with deep holes among them, and so narrow at times the horses could barely pass single file. A more striking scene in travel cannot be imagined, than such a cavalcade winding along a pathway no horses but those native to the soil could thread, on the winding ridge, amid awful solitudes, and scenery whose strange grandeur is nowhere else to be found on the globe. Many have been killed among these savage hollows. In connection with these perils, our traveller sheds touching light upon the Icelander's religious character.

When the priest Egclosen's only horse fell into one of them, mangling his legs, instead of complaining, he went cheerfully on his way. Adds Hooker, "When I was lamenting the number of lives which he informed me were lost among the holes that are here everywhere met with, he stopped me by saying,

‘It is God’s will that it should be so.’” And this writer is in doubt how much of the happy resignation, greater among the Icelanders than “any other people he has read of,” is the fruit of piety, and what may be due to climate, and the force of surrounding circumstances. We think both have their influence, but principally the former, if we recollect that the Bible and hymn-book have always a place in his dwelling. His love of his own island is no less marked, and more beautiful. Whether in Edinburgh, where an Icelandic bride and bridegroom on their wedding-trip looked out upon the great city, and burst into tears with very homesickness, or the sojourner at Copenhagen, who breaks away from a milder climate and greater comforts for the dear “Maid of the North,” the same passionate affection for her is expressed. To the wanderer, wherever he goes, she is the fairest of all the earth.

About seventy miles from Reykjavik, through Thingvalla, from the slopes of Laugafell, rising three hundred feet above the river at its base, the geysers lift their steaming columns to the light. Approaching an inclined plane, which becomes the side of the summit, clouds of smoke, like those from chimneys in a frosty morning, curl upwards from the mounds scattered over it; the highest of which makes the mouth of the Great Geyser. Its circular rim is a brownish gray, and dotted with little hillocks, covered with efflorescence, forming a necklace of silver, or, more nearly, an appearance of ivory beads. The saucer-shaped mouth is more than fifty feet across; and five feet below it is the cylinder

through which the boiling flood is thrown upward from its mysterious depths.

When the Geyser is at rest, the eye looks down upon a pool of water, clear as crystal; none more pellucid, perhaps, in the world. Watching it, the surface is troubled with the unceasing ebullition, ready for the tremendous explosion, whose approach is heralded by signal-guns, exactly resembling distant cannon, and by the trembling of the earth. The agitation increases; the water rolls over the basin's edge; and jets, a dozen feet in height, are thrown upwards with a roar like that of artillery. And this is all the traveller may see for days. At length subterranean thunders and shocks increase, like the "firing from a fleet of ships on a rejoicing day," when the cannon are discharged without regularity, — now singly, and now two or three at the same moment. Then follows jet after jet, increasing in volume and height, till a hundred feet of the columnar waters rise in the air, the base a vast mound of foam, indescribable in magnificence and beauty.

It rolls and flashes through the cloud of mist which veils its impressive wonders, mounting upward in compact shafts, then bursting into numberless long and slender "streamlets of spray," shot like rockets in every direction; all sparkling like a cascade of diamonds in the sun.

In a few moments, suddenly the pageant falls and disappears, while the beholder is spellbound with its glories; and only the basin, with its cloud of steam, is left again.

The provision nature furnishes always for making

a cup of the indispensable tea, is pleasantly told by one who drank it on the spot. A shepherd-boy brought into camp some milk and cream, when Zöega the guide exclaimed, —

“‘Just in time, sir. I’ll make the tea in a minute.’

“‘Where’s your fire?’

“‘Oh! we don’t need fire here: the hot water is always ready. There’s the big boiler up yonder.’

“I looked where Zöega pointed, and saw, about a hundred yards off, a boiling caldron. This was our grand tea-kettle. Upon a nearer inspection, I found that it consisted of two great holes in the rocks, close together, the larger of which was about thirty feet in circumference, and of great depth. The water was as clear as crystal. It was easy to trace the white stratum of rocks, of which the sides were formed, down to the neck of the great shaft through which the water was ejected. Flakes of steam floated off from the surface of the crystal pool, which was generally placid. Only at occasional intervals did it show any symptoms of internal commotion. By dipping my finger down a little way, I found that it was boiling hot. Five minutes’ immersion would be sufficient to skin and boil an entire man.

“Nature has bountifully put these boilers here for the use of travellers. Not a stick or twig of wood grows within a circuit of many miles; and, without fuel, of course it would be impossible to cook food. Here a leg of mutton, submerged in a pot, can be beautifully boiled, plum-puddings cooked, eggs, fish, or any thing you please, done to a nicety. All

this I knew before ; but I had no idea that the water was pure enough for drinking purposes. Such, however, is the fact. No better water ever came out of the earth, in a boiled condition. To make a pot of tea, you simply put your tea into your pot, hold on to the handle, dip the whole concern down into the water, keep it there a while to draw, and your tea is made.

“ I found it excellent, and did not, as I apprehended, discover any unpleasant flavor in the water. It may be slightly impregnated with sulphur, though that gives it rather a wholesome smack. To me, however, it tasted very much like any other hot water.”

The same traveller thus complains of the nightless days while camping here :—

“ How in the world could anybody be expected to sleep where there was no night ? At twelve o’clock, when it ought to be midnight, and ghosts stirring about, it was broad day.

“ After an uneasy doze, I looked out, and the sun’s rays appeared upon the distant mountains. A strange time of the night for the sun to be getting up, only half-past one ; when people in most other parts of the world are snug in bed, and don’t expect to see a streak of sunshine for at least four or five hours. How different from any thing I had ever before seen was the sunrise in Iceland ! No crowing of the cock, no singing of the birds, no merry ploughboys whistling up the horses in the barnyard, no cherry-cheeked milkmaids singing love-ditties as they tripped the green with their pails upon their

heads. All was grim, silent, and deathlike. And yet surely, for all that, the delicate tints of the snow-capped mountains, the peaks of which were now steeped in the rays of the rising sun, the broad valley slumbering in the shade, the clear, sparkling atmosphere, and the exquisite coloring of the Laugafell,—the mighty crag that towers over the geysers,—were beauties enough to redeem the solitude, and imbue the deserts with a celestial glory."

A few rods from the Geyser, is the Strokr, or *churn*, which occasionally makes an exhibition second in grandeur only to the Geyser. It seems to be there for the amusement of travellers, while waiting for the uncertain explosions of the monarch of boiling springs. Its crater, in form, is the reverse of its superior, resembling a saucer in its natural position, minus the bottom; while that is like the same piece of crockery *inverted*. Visitors and their guides dig turf, and pile it in heaps by the mouth; and, when large enough to choke Strokr badly, it is turned over into his throat. After a brief time spent in a noisy but vain effort to masticate or swallow the mass, with a tremendous spasm the angry Strokr sends it forth and upward, mottling the crystal cataract with the ascending earth and stones.

The word "geyser" itself is very descriptive, meaning, *to rush out impetuously*.

The most plausible theory of the cause of these marvellous springs, is that of immense cavities of water so confined in the depths below, that increase of heat, and consequently steam, at any time, upon the surface, forces it through the orifice beneath

the water-level, upward into the air. The heating forces are always at work, but are so irregular in the supply of steam that tourists frequently wait several days before they have a first-class exhibition of the Great Geyser.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mount Hecla.—Magnificent View from its Top.—Sturtshellir Cave.—Its Wild Mythology and Traditions.—Bulandshofdi Pass.—Mud Cauldron.—Dettifoss Falls.—Eagle-Tarns.—Grettis Tak.—Thurrisdale.—Fording Rivers.—Dog-tournament.—Flora.

THE perilous path south-easterly to Hecla is through the usual variety of volcanic scenery, but wilder and more difficult in some of its features as the traveller approaches the volcano. The ascent is toilsome, and, like Alpine mountain-paths, sometimes crossed with chasms, and attended with perils. But we can look over the landscape from its brow, with the eyes of the first American, so far as we know, who reached its top.

“Here I stood on the highest summit of Mount Hecla. A more magnificent prospect was never seen. Iceland was spread below and around me like a map. We were nearly five thousand feet above the level of the sea, and higher than the tops of nearly every mountain in Iceland. To the west and north-west were vast green tracts of meadow-land, checkered with hills, and surrounded by mountains. White, shining rivers intersected the valleys and plains like long silver ribbons. Far in the north, and to the north-east, were the snowy mountains, not in peaks, but stretching away in immense plains of brilliant white, and glistening in the sunshine.

“In a valley, some twenty miles to the north-west, was a beautiful cluster of lakes, the water often of a deep green color, as they reflected the meadows on their banks. Now and then in the landscape would appear the Iceland ‘forest,’ like patches of shrubbery of a dark green hue. Some hills and old lava districts were covered with heath, now in full bloom, and clothing the land in a robe of purple. The surface of Hecla itself, and the ground on every side some distance from the base, was one black mass of lava.

“To the north-west, and near at hand, rising abruptly from the plain to the height of twenty-five hundred feet, was Bjolfell, a bold and singular-looking mountain. A dark cloud lay in the south-east, intercepting the view; but on every other side the sky was clear, and the prospect uninterrupted. To the south, far out to sea,—distant about forty miles,—were the Westman Islands, rising abruptly out of the water to the height of more than two thousand feet, and showing their basaltic cliffs in a clearly defined outline. Cities, villages, and human habitations filled no part of the landscape.

“The magical purity of the atmosphere, and the singular character of this volcanic country, make a view from the top of Mount Hecla one of the most extensive and varied of any on the earth’s surface, not excepting *Ætna* in Sicily, and *Vesuvius* in Italy. Though these latter countries are far richer in natural productions, and abound in cities and towns, and the Bay of Naples is proverbial for its beauty, yet I must say that the view from Mount Hecla is far

more varied and beautiful, on account of the clearness of the atmosphere, and the variety of the mountain, valley, and island scenery.

“ The view from this mountain must extend more than two hundred miles, showing a visible horizon of at least fifteen hundred miles in circuit. Most fortunately the day was beautifully clear ; and after the first half-hour on the summit, except a bank of clouds in the east, the whole country was visible. To the north-east, seemingly quite below us, in the valley of the River Tungná, was a landscape of tiny streams, little lakes, green meadows, and heath-clad hills. One small lake, the Groenavatn (green lake), was shaped like the moon when nearly full, and looked scarcely larger than a saucer. The mountains to the south, the lofty Tindfjalla and Eyjafjalla Jökulls, rose up in separate knobs or peaks, the latter justifying its name of ‘ Mountain of Islands.’ ”

Tourists who visit Mount Hecla sometimes travel towards the south-west coast, visiting the Ruyker Springs, and the Sulphur Mountain, another of Nature’s exhaustless, magnificent, yet terror-exciting laboratories of this mineral.

The road for some distance lies through a so-called Icelandic forest, where, in addition to the usual birch and willow trees, there are bushes bearing a small berry, called the “ blueberry,” the only thing of the fruit kind in Iceland. “ Here, too, is found that most beautiful of all the shrubs and flowers of Iceland, the fragrant heath.”

This beautiful carpet of the lava is one of the first plants found growing upon the thin lava-beds, and

covers nearly one-half of Iceland. The course of the journey brings us to the *Thiorsá*'s banks, where we behold a turbulent and mighty current, sweeping with resistless force to the southern coast. The river is larger than the Hudson at Newburgh, swift as an arrow, white with clay from the mountains, and cold as ice,—in appearance a most formidable stream. Travellers are ferried across in a frail skiff, the guide sitting in the stern of the boat, and leading the horses as they swim behind. Travelling directly down the *Thiorsá*, and from thence along the southern coast, we gain a fine view in clear weather of *Eyjafjalla* and *Tindjfalla* *Jokulls*, which stand in bold relief against the eastern sky.

This route brings the traveller to *Skalholt*, situated in the forks of the *Bruará* and the *Kvita* Rivers. Though dignified, on some of our maps, with the title of the “capital” of Iceland, it is simply a farm; and contains the ruins of a small cathedral church, where one of the bishops of Iceland used to officiate.

The tourist north will be likely to visit the famous cavern at *Sturtshellir*. Here, according to the *Voluspa*, *Surtur*, the demon “who is one day to destroy the universe with fire,” had his abode. Bandits, during the early centuries, found a safe hiding-place within its gloomy portals. Of the savage and tragical life here, we have some account in written traditions. Among these is the story of the Cave-men; a mixture, doubtless, of fact and fiction. The lawless heroes of the narrative were fifteen pupils of the school at *Holar*. Having murdered an old woman, they fled with her daughters, seeking a

secure solitude. At length they made Sturtshellir their lonely retreat. They became an organized band, foraging among the flocks and herds of the nearest farms. They appeared at the parish church at Kalmanstunga, armed, placing themselves back to back, in two rows in the nave, for mutual defence. Drowning their own children, they rarely, if ever, murdered the peasants, who lived in constant fear of death at their hands. To get rid of these Cave-men, a courageous young man joined the band, learned their haunts and habits, and betrayed them. After various fortunes, feigning sickness, he was left alone one day, with their women; when, mounting a horse grazing at the mouth of the cavern, he galloped home. He soon after led an armed force to their wayside camping-ground, and fell upon them while asleep. After a deadly fight, the outlaws were slain. The victors then marched to the cavern, only to have another bloody encounter with the women, who defended themselves bravely by hurling down firebrands, and pouring water upon them. They at last were also conquered. The daring young leader lost a foot in this adventure, but won the highest admiration of his countrymen.

About midway from Reykholt to Sturtshellir, is the depopulated village of Kalmanstunga; a sad memorial of famine and disease, which have left only a single farmhouse, the ruins of a stone church, and an overgrown burying-ground, with its scarcely visible hillocks. What tales of lonely agony, death, and hasty interment, had they voices, could they tell us!

The proprietor of the byre is a stone-cutter, carv-

ing headstones for the graves of his remote countrymen, a silversmith, and a genius generally.

Not far beyond his home, rolls swiftly a branch of the White River, bordering a forest many of whose birches are eight feet in height; so that here, at least, it may be said, Icelandic woods "*wave their boughs* in the breeze."

Between Reykholt and Miklaholt, along a wild and unfrequented path, westward on the southern line of the Snaefells Syssel, travelled only by sheep-hunters, and amid scenery in which "new forms and new colors present themselves at every moment, the red, vitrified-looking inland sea tossed hither and thither by the once surging vapors beneath, the surface of its waves blown into a thousand fantastic shapes, as if regiments of demon glass-blowers had chosen this as the scene of their labors," rises Eldborg, or the Fortress of Fire. It is an old crater, eighteen hundred feet in diameter, resembling the turret of a monitor—"a sand-and-cinder" height, encircled by a rampart, and a relic of fiery floods.

There are regions of unvisited solitude, where repose crystal lakes, into which the curious traveller sometimes looks, the home only of wild birds, among which the eagle holds his kingly eyrie. They are called after him, Eagle-tarns. On the way northward from Thingvalla, is Grettis-Tak, and the mysterious Thorirdsdale. The Tak is a massive slab of stone, with an aperture evidently intended for guidance to the mountain depths of dreariest seclusion it is possible to imagine. Fable says Grettir carried that rock, which he had perforated, too heavy for a

regiment of men to lift, and put it in position, to point out the vale which no mortal ever entered but himself. It was one of the outlaw's most inaccessible hiding-places. Repeated efforts have been made by tourists to reach it, but in vain. No path to this hermitage of Grettir has yet rewarded the toilsome climbing, and perilous descent, of the few who have attempted to discover what all believe to exist, — an inaccessible retreat, whose utter loneliness it makes us shudder to think of as a human abode, over which howled during long, long nights, arctic storms.

Near the extreme point of north-western travel, is the mud-caldron of Namar-Hilth, one of Iceland's greatest wonders. Imagine yourself standing upon a winding path along a mountain cleft, and below, "a plain of mud, the wash from the hills, bounded by a lava-field ; the mountains steaming to their very tops, and depositing sulphur, the primrose hue of which gives extraordinary brightness to the landscape. From the plain, vast clouds of steam rise into the air, and roll in heavy whirls before the wind, whilst a low drumming sound proceeding from them tells of the fearful agencies at work."

A day's ride farther, and the thunder of Dettifoss breaks upon the ear. This is a plunge of the Jökulsá, probably the largest river in Iceland, two hundred feet, in several commingling torrents, into cavernous depths. Among these they are hurled as if in wrath by demons there, upward and outward, with blending thunders. Utter desolation and awful grandeur, defying speech, declare the few who have seen the cataract, make the scene one which is unsurpassed on the globe in terrible sublimity.

Besides the Jokulsa, one hundred and twenty-five miles long, the Thjorsá and Kvita are fine rivers. South of the Vatna Jokull, where the Jokulsa rises, torrents two miles wide, only eight or ten miles from the sea, "whirl down with frightful velocity, carrying with them masses of ice dislodged from the glaciers which are their feeders, and volumes of sand from the volcanic mountains which they drain."

These streams are forded by swimming the ponies, or by the usual ferries, often in frail boats, attended with more or less danger.

The fords are changing constantly by the force of the currents, and what they bring from the heights among which they rise. This fact illustrates the rule of safety for travellers: "Never enter a stream until your guide has tried it."

Baring-Gould, while crossing one of the swift rivers, became bewildered in the angry flood through which his horse was floundering, and swayed in his saddle. At this crisis of affairs, the shout of his guide ahead reached his ear, "Look towards the shore!" He obeyed; and, fixing his eye on the distant bank, he soon regained his composure, and safely reached it. The moral significance of the incident made a deep impression. And surely, to Christian thought, nothing can be more beautifully suggestive of the calming, cheering power, amid the "deep waters" of earthly trial, of faith's clear look towards the celestial shore.

The dogs of Iceland, like the people, have some singular ways of their own. We find an account by a traveller half a century or more ago, of a dog-

tournament, which, it seems, is of common occurrence. Across a river near Reykjavik was the field reached by a bridge, and also by stepping-stones in the bed of the stream. One morning two dozen dogs were seen running from the capital, and other parts of the country, towards these crossings; among them, one larger than the rest, who acted as leader, taking his position on a mound in the centre of the canine crowd. After a momentary pause, three or four scampered away a hundred feet, or so, and commenced a sham fight. After a skirmish, they returned; and others succeeded them, till all but the captain, who remained unmoved, had their share in the pastime. For a quarter of an hour the engagements were continued good-naturedly, to the music of incessant barking; when they quietly dispersed, and each took his own homeward way.

Of the forests which were once evidently of considerable growth and extent, as on portions of our own Cape Cod and Plymouth Beach, where are now only sandbanks, we find, besides stunted bushes, here and there an exceptional tree. Near the governor's residence is a solitary example; and, at Arkeuyri, a mountain-ash, twenty-five feet high.

The flora is larger and more beautiful than one unacquainted with it could imagine. Modest yet lovely blossoms greet the summer tourist, along the valleys, and on the little cottage-lawns; while it furnishes the Icelander with dyes in considerable variety, and nourishing plants, especially lichens, for food.

The pink lamba-grass and white tassels of the cotton thrush are among the common ornamental work of the brief summer landscape.





CAVE OF STURSHELLIOR. — Page 259.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Calamities. — Plague. — Black-Death — Famine. — Pirates. — Volcanoes and Earthquakes. — Effect on the Condition and Character of the People. — Discouragement and Decline. — A Revolution. — A Petitioner.

PRE-EMINENT in scenery, historic position, constitutional liberty, language, and character, Iceland has also no rival in the number and variety of the terrible calamities which have tried the faith, courage, and resources of this true-hearted people.

In 1402 a plague, whose origin and deadly nature are unexplained, in two years mowed down, it is recorded, two-thirds of the entire population. This unexampled mortality was followed by so severe weather, that a tenth part of the cattle died. Another epidemic, towards the close of the century, made similar desolation.

The small-pox had its days of ghastly havoc. But the most malignant of all the forms of pestilence walking in the darkness of Iceland's long nights, and the destruction wasting at noonday, was the Black-death, whose touch was corruption and decay ; and which, it is supposed, depopulated once prosperous Greenland.

The failure of the small crops by unusual frosts and storms, and the destruction of fish by marine

earthquakes and eruptions, have also shrivelled to awful death thousands during a single year.

What imagination can form a true picture of such a work of the destroying angel, during days which have only a noon-time of sunlight?—the dead carried out to burial in their lava-graves beneath the gloomy shadows of mountains, the way lit up by auroral flames, cold moonbeams, or only the glimmering lights amid the storm, carried in living hands.

The piratical invasions of this solitary isle had, from the beginning, been frequent from distant tribes and realms, including England and France, plundering and ravaging the Westman Islands, and also the mainland. The most frightful descent was in 1627, when a large Algerine force coasted along the southern boundaries, bearing away whatever they found as spoils, murdering the inhabitants, and carrying into wretched captivity four hundred men and women. When, nine years afterwards, the Danish king offered a ransom, only thirteen saw their native land, out of thirty-seven found alive. The unwritten history of the horrors of that slavery will not be known this side the “grand assize” of all nations.

The greatest and most startling wonder of Iceland, after all, is its volcanic condition through the ages since the hour of its birth; the entire island steaming, smoking, and often quaking, with its frequent outflows of the fiery flood. These tremendous forces constantly menace the people with destruction through the prison which they created, their thunders of unrest, tongues of flame, and

cloudy columns, forever heard and seen throughout the land.

In English and Danish archives, are records of terrific eruptions as far back as the year 1300; and no one can tell us what terrors, before that date, went abroad from fell and jokull, along the inhabited valleys.

We have, however, authentic illustration of what has substantially been the repeated calamities of Iceland by fire, in the record made from personal observation, by Chief-Justice Stephensen. This was during the summer of 1783, in the Skaptafields Syssel.

The spring had been remarkably "delightful, with soft breezes from the south," and vegetation, luxuriant in the month of May, was brightened by "the many flowers;" so that "all rejoiced in the prospect of a fruitful summer and an abundant harvest."

But, "towards the latter end of May, a bluish and light smoke was seen floating along the surface of the earth." With the coming of June, fears saddened the faces of the entire population of the Syssel, as they walked upon the waves of increasingly frequent and severe earthquakes, especially in the morning and evening. On the 8th a vast bank of smoky cloud stretched across the heavens, scattering showers of sand and ashes upon the earth, and making darkness, beneath its ominous wings, so deep, "white paper could not be distinguished when held against the wall." The "shocks and roarings were like the meeting of unnumbered cataracts; several fire-spouts were seen rising from the moun-

tains towards the north ; and the black cloud became more lofty every day, while earthquakes, peals of thunder, and strange sounds, increased."

On June 12 "a dreadful fire-stream came pouring down from Skaptar-Jökelm (an ice-mountain) with the greatest impetuosity, like a foaming sea, into the Skaptaa. This river everywhere ran through deep valleys, and lofty cliffs, which were in many parts from four to five hundred, or even six hundred feet high ; yet the fire-stream not only filled up these cavities, but actually overflowed a considerable tract of land on both sides. It is only in a few places that there are still to be seen *above the lava, some of the tops of the highest mountains* that formerly enclosed the Skaptaa."

Then the atmosphere became thick with a suffocating smoke of most offensive smell, "concealing the face of the sun, and absorbing its brilliant and beneficent rays. Seldom could this luminary be seen through the thick and sulphurous steam ; and when, now and then, it became visible, it had the appearance of a globe of gloomy and blood-red color." Torrents of fire surged along the mountain slopes, and, by flowing into chasms and caverns, blew up solid hills of lava, as a blast of powder does a ledge of granite. Lightnings played incessantly around the horizon ; between which and the towns rose lofty columns of fire, moving towards each other, until they stood a solid wall of flame extending from the lowering, echoing heavens, to the torn, scathed, and shaken earth.

Mysterious and terrific sounds went booming

along the lighted cliffs; while homes, horses and cattle, farm-lands, and churches, were no more than withered leaves in a conflagration, before the hissing, broadening tides of lava, rushing in different directions for scores of miles, and drying up rivers, that, from time immemorial, had dashed madly to the sea. Wild-birds and fish died by myriads in the heated air, and disappearing boiling waters.

A farmer, who saw the approaching flood of molten lava, hastened to remove his family and stock to an island in a river, only to see them, from his yet uninvaded byre, suddenly wrapped in smoke and steam from an opening crater, and all perish together.

From the iron-like plains, fissures opened, and spouted forth the liquid fire; and then some old crag would tremble and fall with a crash, reverberating like the thunder of a thousand cannon, while from its base burst forth a glowing stream. For weeks the sun, like gore-tinged metal, hung in the sky, just dipping his burning forehead at night below the lurid horizon.

It is not strange that “every heart was filled with the greatest terror, and the poor inhabitants expected every moment that heaven and earth would be annihilated.”

In West Skaptafjeld, “where all the most fearful phenomena in nature had concentrated themselves on one spot, it was common to see the animals running about the pastures as if in a state of madness: many of them, unable to find food, or even shelter to defend them from the surrounding horrors, plunged into the fire.”

The destruction which followed the eruption, unrivalled in all recorded horrors of volcanic action, from infected air, blasted pasturage, and poisoned vegetation of every kind, mocks the power of language to describe in ghastly detail. Famine drove the inhabitants to revolting expedients to prolong life. Old hides of animals who died of disease were boiled and eaten. Scurvy, and inflammatory diseases which are nameless, prevailed. Swollen limbs, ulcers, loosened teeth, decaying tongues, agonies, and awful death, were common.

In winter-time the earth frozen to a great depth, together with physical weakness, made burial often impossible, and the bodies were burned ; and, even when shallow graves were dug, several were thrown into a common burial-place, and scarcely covered from sight ; these mounds of death, in turn, becoming centres of fatal exhalations.

No wholesome food could be obtained ; and families wandered homeless and starving towards the coast, only to perish at length beneath the pitiless storm.

A few figures are given from the record of Chief-Justice Stephensen, whose narrative, ordered by the Danish king, with all its strength and vividness, is more suggestive to the imagination by the clearly conscious inability to describe the multiplied terrors and sufferings, than by what he does narrate with conscientious regard to truth.

Nine thousand of the inhabitants died, and not less than twenty thousand horses, ten thousand cattle, and over one hundred and thirty thousand sheep. Has the world another such record, among so small and scattered a population ?

And yet the degree of calmness and resignation of Christian faith in the presence of the overwhelming displays of Jehovah's power, and cruel visitations of lawless men, were never surpassed, if equalled, excepting by the ancient martyrs on the rack and in the flames. A dozen or more seasons of devastation differing in extent, and destruction of life and property, besides many volcanic eruptions of local and unimportant results comparatively, are recorded in the past four hundred years.

It is no marvel, that self-possession, religious reverence, and resignation should stamp the character of such a people.

Of these almost exterminating visitations, the genial, sympathetic McKenzie said touchingly, "They are recorded in the annals of Iceland with an affecting and almost painful simplicity. No attempts are made to excite a sentimental interest, beyond what humanity itself would yield to the simple story of such suffering. We are told that whole families were extinguished, and districts depopulated, by the virulence of disease ; that the learned, the pious, the wealthy, and the powerful, all dropped into a common grave ; that the labors of industry ceased ; that genius and literature disappeared ; and that the wretched remnant of the Icelanders, scarcely themselves saved from destruction, sunk into a state of apathy, superstition, and ignorance. In pursuing his melancholy narrative, the historian sometimes looks back for a moment to the former celebrity and splendors of his country ; but he goes no farther, and all beyond is left to the feelings and imagination of the reader."

Amid the physical convulsions described, who would think a civil revolution possible in Iceland, or guess how it could occur among a people, in origin, language, and religious faith, a unit, and uncomplaining for centuries in their allegiance to a foreign realm?

During the war of 1808, between England and Denmark, the supplies from the latter country, on which the Icelanders necessarily depended, were largely cut off by the superior naval force of the British government. In these circumstances virtual neutrality in trade was clearly desirable. An English mercantile house, whose financial head was Samuel Phelps, Esq., determined to open traffic in articles of common need, principally barley-meal, potatoes, and salt; assuming that business relation to the island. Jorgen Jorgensen, a Dane of adventurous career, having for several years served in the British navy, and then in the Danish, at this time a paroled prisoner in London, was the acknowledged leader of the expedition.

January, 1809, he sailed in "The Clarence" from Liverpool for Iceland, hoisting American colors, and furnished with papers of the same nationality, to sustain the apparent position of neutrals. The undertaking was heroic, at least, in midwinter along the arctic line. The good ship arrived safely, but the Danish authorities refused permission to land the cargo. The threat of seizing a brig lying at anchor, and opening hostilities, brought them to terms. At this crisis the governor, Count Tramp, returned from Copenhagen, where he had passed several

months. The English war-ship "Rover" just then came up the harbor, and dropped anchor before Reykjavik. The count evidently felt the force of this last argument, and signed articles of agreement, granting liberty to trade. "The Margaret and Ann," with Mr. Phelps on board, arrived from England. Finding the treaty had not been published, as stipulated, while the proclamation forbidding the natives to trade with the English on pain of death was still posted in the streets, on the 25th of June, with twelve armed men, he went to the governor's house, and made him his prisoner. The natives who at that season of the year came in from the country like wandering nomads, leaning on their iron-pointed alpenstocks, used for walking on icy slopes, saw with apparent indifference Count Tramp removed to "The Margaret and Ann." The next step was a proclamation by Jorgensen, dissolving Iceland's connection with Denmark, restoring a republican government, and conferring on himself supreme command. A battery was erected on the shore, and the new colors, three split stock-fish on a ground of blue, flung out to the breeze. The old Icelandic banner was a single split stock-fish, environed by an oval garland. Mr. Jorgensen's little game of revolution seemed now to be a brilliant success. But just then, from the deck of the governor's prison, he sees the British war-sloop "Talbot," in command of the Hon. Alexander Jones, coming up the Fiord. He had touched at Havneford, and listened to the bitter complaints of Danish merchants over the outrage at the capital.

And lo ! a sudden collapse of the bloodless revolution. Count Tramp is released, and goes to London to spread his grievance before the English government ; and Jorgensen is sent home to give an account of himself before the same august tribunal. Iceland returned to her allegiance to the Danish crown ; having never had, in all her history since the feuds of the heroic period, a baptism of blood. We think no other nation or tribe can furnish the world such a record of a thousand years.

The first, and probably the only petition received by the revolutionary government of the island is so transparent in its simplicity, revealing through it the absence of all intentional wrong, with a high sense of honor and fidelity, that we copy it. Without offering the shadow of an apology for any infringement of that pure morality presented to the world in the precepts and example of the great Teacher, we think the peasant's appeal a model of its kind, in its spirit, and the beauty of expression. It should be borne in mind that Thorlevsen, by the imprisonment of his wife, and by mutual understanding, was separated finally, but without a decree of divorce. Consequently he could not have a legal marriage. It was under these peculiar embarrassments that he writes from his secluded home for relief.

A Petition from Biarne Thorlevsen.

SHEWETH :

That in the year 1805, my wife, Thorunn Gunnlaugsdotter, was sentenced to two years' labor in the

Icelandic workhouse, only for the simple thing of stealing a sheep, which, besides, was nothing at all to me. The separation which took place accordingly, occasioned that I was compelled to take a young girl as my housekeeper, who otherwise much recommended herself by her ability and fidelity. The consequence of these circumstances was, that the girl produced two little girls, after each other, whose father I am. We were then separated by order of the magistrates; and in this manner must the education of two innocent, but at the same time right handsome little girls remain neglected, unless she, as mother, in conjunction with me, as father, is not hindered from following the irresistible instincts of nature in the care and education of the children. But this cannot be done if we are not allowed to marry; and I humbly beg Mr. Bishop Videlin's declaration; so much the more so, as I am convinced of the justice of my cause.

I also commit my life and worldly happiness to your excellency's gracious consideration.

With the confidence and attachment of a subject,

BIARNE THORLEVSEN.

SKRIDNAFELL within BARDERSTRAND SYSEL,
1st August, 1809.

To his Excellency, Mr. Jorgen Jorgensen, Protector of the whole island of Iceland, and Chief Commander by sea and land.

Upon proper inquiry, the bishop, finding that Mrs. Thorlevsen was desirous to have both the separation and new domestic relation legalized, issued the formal

decree ; and the happy little family were re-united at Skridnafell, and many years ago, doubtless, the parents have rested in the quiet burial-place by their parish church.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Gathering to the Millennial Jubilee. — The Scenes in the Bay, and Streets of the Capital. — The King's Arrival. — Banquet. — People's Festival. — The Visit to Thingvalla. — A Grand Occasion. — Speeches. — Poetry. — New Ensign. — The Present and Future of Iceland.

REYKJAVIK never presented a more animated spectacle than on the morning of July 30, 1874. In its harbor lay six frigates; a Norwegian, a Swedish, a Danish, a German, and two French, with their national colors floating in the breeze. Twenty smaller vessels had flung out their flags.

On the opposite side of the harbor, lay at anchor the English steamer "Albion," which brought the American delegation to the Jubilee; and it included an illustrious trio, — C. W. Field, Bayard Taylor, and Dr. Hayes the arctic explorer.

Beyond, and on either hand, the myriad sea-fowl seemed to sympathize with the spirit of the grand gala-day. Eider-ducks, puffins, terns, gulls, the skua, and the meteor-like falcon were cutting the air with their many-colored wings; while beneath them the solan-goose floated with the heavy swell which succeeds a storm. Their screams echoed among the cliffs, in a wild medley of arctic music.

On the beach, and along the clean, lava-sanded

streets, with flagged sidewalks, running from the capital to the hillsides, throngs of Danes and Icelanders were waiting an event, which, during a national existence of a thousand years, had never occurred before,— the landing of a reigning king on the soil of Iceland. Banners hung from the windows of the houses, whose yard-fences had been newly painted with a dark color, while in the windows bloomed the rose, geranium, and mignonette. The skies alone seemed to frown on the scene, as if they had not yet become reconciled to the transfer of the republic to the protection of a throne.

At last the desired signal appeared in the distance down the harbor; and, soon after, the masts of the royal vessel "Jylland" rose above the bold headland; and then the gayly-decked ship appeared, and, with a flash and boom of the cannon, proclaimed the approach of the king of Denmark,— to the most of the spectators the first sight of a royal frigate bearing a sovereign.

It passed slowly between the foreign frigates, whose officers were on deck in full uniform, with their men; the salutes sending their echoes far away among the startled sea-birds along the coast. The ship dropped anchor, a boat glided ashore, and Gov. Finsen was soon alongside of the "Lylland." In another moment he disappeared over the frigate's rail, into the presence of the king. The commanders of the fleet followed him, on the same errand.

Later an eight-oared boat pushed out from the royal frigate, with Christian IX. on board; and, not far away, the American party urged their rowers

with their three oars to keep abreast, at least, of the king's craft, flying arrow-like to the shore.

The king stepped upon the royal pier prepared for his landing, covered with a crimson canopy, and bordered with a double row of garlanded Danish flags. When he reached the platform to which it sloped, the authorities met him with their brief welcome. This formal reception was remarkably quiet, and quite characteristic of the people. Led by the governor, the king, his son, and suite moved rapidly away, followed by the bishop in velvet and satin, a snowy Elizabethan ruff, and a high hat, attended by the clergy. Behind these came the native committee, a body of strong, fresh-looking men, of dignified bearing. Reaching the lawn in front of the governor's residence, the crowd gave him the first rousing cheer; their unsensational lives just beginning to warm up with the excitement of the memorable day in their island's long history.

King Christian's fine face, whose prevailing expression was that of honesty and kindly feeling, every moment of contact with the people, won steadily their admiring confidence. A little incident illustrated the true dignity and unaffected sincerity of his character. His majesty greeted a blind old man, taking his hand. "Who are you?" said the latter. "I am called Christian the Ninth," said the king. "Well, then," Bjarne remarked, "if you take a blind man by surprise, you must expect to hear such questions."

Soon Madam Finsen appeared, "dressed in simple black silk, without any ornaments." Her presenta-

tion to royalty was the perfection of dignity and grace.

Then the bishop and other dignitaries, advancing from the foot of the garden, led by a scarlet-coated chamberlain, entered the governor's residence.

In the crowd outside were seen a few of the ancient costumes, mingled with the prevailing modern styles of dress.

Many of the women "wore square bodices of some dark color, a gown with many plaits about the waist, with bright blue or red aprons. Nearly all had a flat cap, or, rather, a circular piece of black cloth, on the top of the head, with a long black tassel on one side, hanging from a silver or gilded cylindrical ring, an inch or two in length. Some of the girls had their hair braided, but many wore it loose; and one maiden's magnificent pale-yellow mane suggested a descent from Brynhilde. The men showed only two colors,—the brown of their *wadmal* coats and trousers, and the ruddy tan of their faces. Few of them are handsome, and their faces are grave and undemonstrative; but they inspire confidence by the simple strength expressed in the steady blue eye, and the firm set of the lips. There were plenty of tawny or piebald ponies, with manes like lions, in the streets."

While the king is resting in the cheerful hospitality of Gov. Finsen's home, we turn to see and hear who came, and what they brought to the jubilee of a thousand years since Naddod's colony built their habitations on the island.

Among the large number of foreigners besides the

American delegation, which includes Mr. Murat Halstead, England has sent Mr. William H. Gladstone, son of the late premier; Mr. George Browning, secretary of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts; Mr. Eirik Magnusson, one of the librarians of the University of Cambridge; Dr. David Ker, of "The London Daily News," and many others. From the Scandinavian lands have come a small host of authors and artists and students, including, besides those already mentioned, the poets Karl Andersen and Nordal Rolfsen, the marine painters Sörensen and Boll, the antiquary Worsaae, and the Danish critic, Richard Kaufmann. The "Pester Lloyd," one of the chief journals of Hungary, commissioned one of its editors, Dr. Max Nordau, to be present at the proceedings. Even "farthest Ind" has its representative, in the person of Dr. G. W. Leitner, head of the government college at Lahore, and editor of the "India Public Opinion."

The collection of books sent to the National Library of Iceland by American authors and scholars, as a contribution in connection with the celebration, was unexpectedly large. Mr. Henry Braëm, the Danish consul at New York, generously forwarded, at his own expense, no fewer than twenty-two cases and twelve packages, given by Harvard College, Yale College, Cornell University, the University of Wisconsin, by the State libraries at Albany and Harrisburg, and by the cities of Boston, Providence, New York, Philadelphia, &c. Numerous packages were also sent forward, either directly, by way of Scotland, or through the Smithsonian Institution.

From England, the most important gift was that of the University of Oxford, consisting of the publications of the Clarendon Press; a series of standard works, numerous enough to constitute a library of themselves.

The old Scandinavian spirit had responded during the summer, wherever the descendants of the Northmen lived, to the appeal made by the approaching millennial to their historic pride. While Norwegian authors and societies republished ancient, and added new memorials of Iceland's former greatness, public meetings were called, and addresses voted to its people. Universities appointed delegates; and even the Norwegian Parliament passed enthusiastically the motion to forward their formal congratulations. Nor was our own land, which absorbs "every kindred, tongue, and people," wanting in the Norse blood, and its quickened flow in prospect of the millennial. A celebration was appointed and observed at Milwaukee, an account of which is given in another chapter.

The Lutheran bishop of Iceland, Pétursson, cultivated and finished gentleman; Herr Thorberg, governor of the southern district; and the faculty of the university, with inferior officials,—spared no possible attentions to make our American delegation at home and happy in their visit.

The prevailing languages in conversation, between the inhabitants and foreigners, were French, Danish, and English; the latter more frequently employed by the ladies, who spoke it with "fluency and elegance," and the first-named by the gentlemen. All

classes are sensitive on the single point, recognized equality, whatever the outward relation for the time. It is the grand old Gothic independence and self-respect, which demands the regard for his humanity and its rights claimed by another, unaffected by the trappings and badges of merited or unmerited distinction.

Sunday morning, Aug. 2, dawned gloriously upon the island, after the storm of previous days.

The distant jokulls, through the marvellously transparent air, lifted their crowns of empurpled white ; beneath which, tinged with brown, their dark sides sloped away, like majestic robes, into shadows softened with the golden light. The harbor presented a fairy scene. The flags of a dozen nationalities fluttered in the breeze ; even "the fishing-smacks were gay with bunting," the interlinked banners all radiant with the splendors which played upon their ever-changing folds.

It can scarcely create wonder, that, on such an anniversary, the sabbath lost its usual quiet, and, with a subdued festivity, presented the stir and animation of a national jubilee.

Among the banners flying from every house on shore, was conspicuous "Young Iceland's" banner, supplanting the Danish stock-fish ; its blended colors, white, red, and blue, with the lordly falcon embroidered in the centre.

At half-past ten o'clock the crowd began to move towards the open doors of the cathedral. The building is plain, with a tower, and chime of bells. On this great occasion the relics of the dress of olden time re-appeared.

“The open, grassy square around the old building was covered with picturesque groups of people; the lake in the rear of the town glittered in the sun, and the high peaks of Keylur slept in the blue distance. Genuine Icelandic costumes appeared at last, and original and graceful they were. The women wore white helmets of a curious pattern; the horn curving over in front, six inches above the head, the base richly embroidered with gold, and a white veil thrown over all, and floating upon the shoulders. They had also closely-fitting jackets of dark cloth, heavily braided with gold or silver, and broad belts of silver filagree work. Not more than half a dozen of the men, in all, wore the old national costume. It consists of a jacket and knee-breeches of dark-gray homespun cloth, stockings of the same cloth, sealskin shoes, and a round hat, with the brim turned up. The only ornament is a bow of red ribbon at the knee.”

The royal party, followed by foreign naval officers, soon entered the church, the choir singing an anthem, ten having been composed for the occasion.

The chandeliers flung their light upon the altar, and from gallery pillars festooned with wreaths of Iceland’s mountain heather. A wreath of flowers encircled the beautiful marble font given by Thorwaldsen, formerly kept at Hoolum. The light-red walls and dark panelling of the audience-room, enlivened by these simple decorations, gave an impressive air, whose harmony with the day, place, and ceremonies, was felt by all.

The usual order of Lutheran worship now opened before a crowded assembly, but only a fraction of the gathered multitude.

“At the same hour the same service, with its striking lesson for the day,—parts of the Ninetieth Psalm,—was celebrated in more than two hundred churches throughout the island. Bishop Pétursson wore a pallium presented ages ago, by one of the popes, to an old Icelandic bishop; the altar ablaze with candles; and the verses, ‘Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations: for a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past,’ produced, under the circumstances, feelings of no ordinary interest.”

The “Psalm of Praise,” written by Mathias Jochumson, the music by Sveinbjornasson, moved the Icelanders as never before any multitude was stirred, in their humble temples of worship.

The refrain, “*Islands Pusand Ár*” (“Iceland’s Thousand Years”), rang with solemn, subdued power through the cathedral, filling the eyes of the native population with tears of chastened gladness, and reverent homage to Him with whom “a thousand years are as one day.”

The sermon, intelligible only to the Icelanders, was delivered in the customary half-chanting style; but they gave to it close attention, as is their habit in all religious services.

This religious celebration of an hour and a half closed with another anthem of great pathos and melody, to which the language is so well adapted.

Without a formal procession, the invited guests

repaired, at four o'clock, to the royal banquet at the University Building. Many from inland were permitted to look in upon the appetizing wonders of the table, which they for the first time beheld, — a continental table spread in Iceland. Those that sat down to the feast were nearly all dressed in civil, naval, or military uniform.

“The royal marshal, Baron Holten, who seems to have been chosen, like his fellow-marshals at all courts, for love of good cheer and good fellowship, Gov. Finssen, Minister Klein, Capt. Malte-Brun, Adm. Lagercrantz of the Swedish navy, the bishop, Chief-Justice Jonasson, and, finally, hale and hearty Dr. Ajaltalin, were among the number. Last of all came Madam Finssen, preceding the king and Prince Waldemar. Tall and stately, in her black moire robe, she was as composed and perfect in manner as when she descended the garden steps to welcome his majesty.

“The king walked around the circle without any ceremony, exchanging a few words with each person as he passed. Prince Waldemar is not more than eighteen or nineteen, and still boyishly diffident in his manner. He seemed inclined to keep in the background as much as possible.”

At the blast of the trumpets of the band, the king, with Madam Finssen on his arm, led the company to the banqueting hall, decorated with flags and arms, to partake of a dinner, for the most part imported in cans from Copenhagen. Danish silver shone on the tables, and by it lay a gold-lettered bill of Danish fare; with a sight of all others, the rarest and

most tempting to the natives,—black Hamburg grapes.

After the feast, the king rose, and warmly thanked the people for the hearty welcome which had greeted him, and gave the sentiment, “Long live old Iceland!” The band played; a signal from the roof opened the iron tongues of the war-ships, sending their battle-music along the peaceful shores.

Speeches and toasts from Klein, minister of justice, and other distinguished guests, completed the banquet.

At six o'clock the crowd moved towards the hill-side a mile distant, to hold the “People’s Festival;” passing the prison, Reykjavik’s finest structure, but without an inmate to appreciate its cleanly rooms and verdant lawn.

The declivity is crowned with a tower, built by the students for sheltered pastimes, now serving the purpose of a beacon for the harbor, and also for inland travellers.

Upon the cleared, broad brow of the hill, around the speaker’s stand, gathered two thousand people. The king’s tent was pitched near, and another for refreshments.

The elevation commanded a fine view of Reykjavik, cradled between two hills; the harbor dotted with islands, and the dark ranges of hills and mountains piled away against the horizon.

The king’s suite entered the area, and a salute with hand-grenades cost a gunner his right hand. Then a grand old song floated away to the sea, and blended with its dashings upon the same shores it

washed a thousand years ago, changed only in outlines by fire and flood.

Speeches were next in order from foreign visitors, with songs between them by a male choir from the capital. Bayard Taylor contributed a beautiful poem to the occasion, extemporized on shipboard, and translated into Icelandic by Mathias Jochumsson, who has given his countrymen, in Icelandic, some of the plays of Shakspeare. The effusion needed no apology from its author. He was introduced on this occasion by Mr. Magnússon, as the *skald* from America. He made a brief and enthusiastic speech in Danish, concluding with the sentiment, "Hail to Iceland, and the whole Norse race!"

AMERICA TO ICELAND.

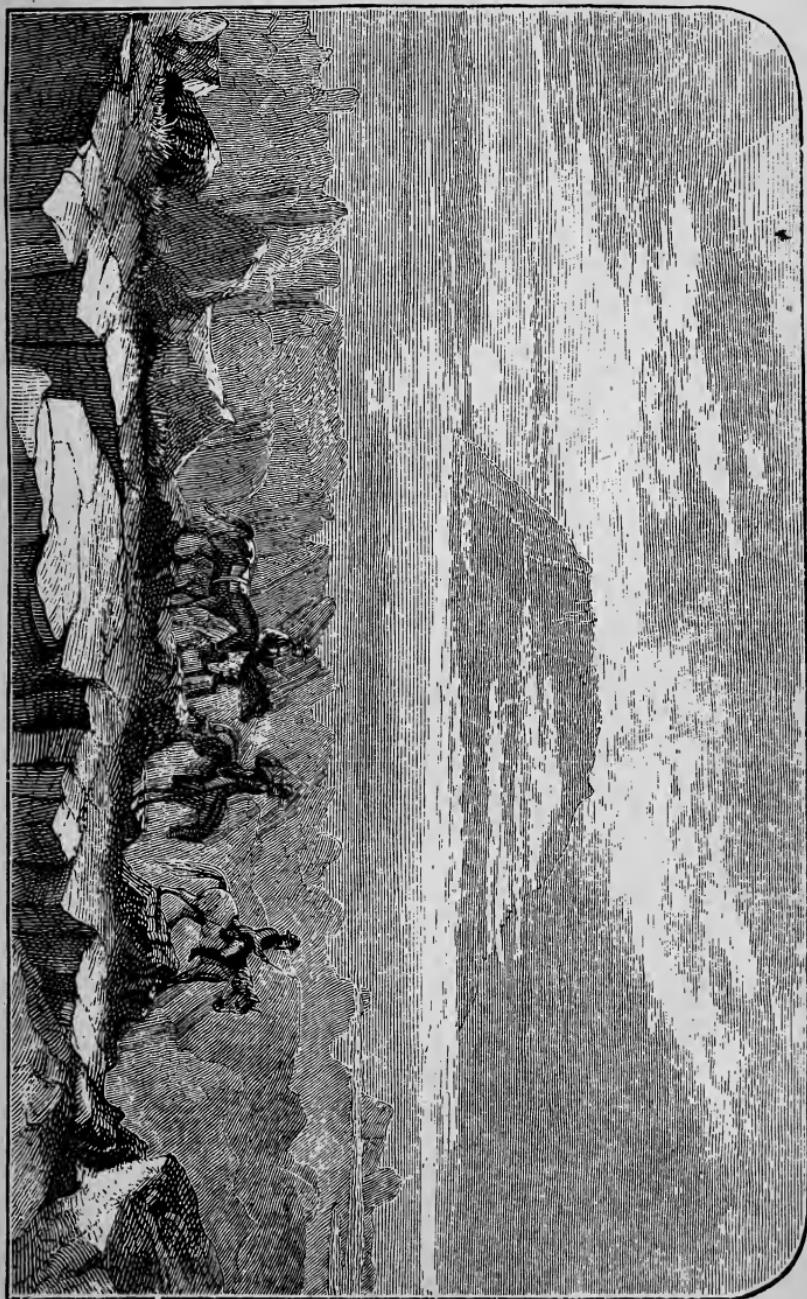
We come, the children of thy Vinland,
The youngest of the world's high peers,
O land of steel and song and saga,
To greet thy glorious thousand years!

Across that sea, the son of Erik
Dared with his venturous dragon's prow:
From shores where Thorfinn set thy banner
Their latest children seek thee now.

Hail! motherland of skalds and heroes,
By love of freedom hither hurled;
Fire in their hearts as in thy mountains,
And strength like thine to shake the world!

When war and ravage wrecked the nations,
The bird of song made thee her home;
The ancient gods, the ancient glory,
Still dwelt within thy shores of foam.

Here, as a fount may keep its virtue
Where all the rivers turbid run,
The manly growth of deed and daring
Was thine beneath a scantier sun.



A PERILOUS PATH — Page 249.



Set far apart, neglected, exiled,
Thy children wrote their runes of pride,
With power that brings, in this thy triumph,
The conquering nations to thy side.

What though thy native harps be silent?
The chord they struck shall ours prolong:
We claim thee kindred, call thee mother,
O land of saga, steel, and song!

A half-hour's reception was given by the king, and improved by a large number of the assemblage. The impression made by the kindly dignity and interest in the people, by Christian IX., was expressed in quiet admiration by the words, "He is very friendly, and we are sure he is honest."

Aug. 5, the royal party mounted ponies for the geysers, through Thingvalla, to return there in time for the closing festivities of the Millennial. At the same time the American party started on a similar excursion. The falling rain did not prevent the gathering of the natives to see the cavalcades leave their capital.

The interpreter of the Yankee procession was the daughter of Zoega; the honest guide, if we mistake not, of the second tourist from this country who visited the island, and the first, if not the only one, to make sketches of its scenery. Zoega had taught the sprightly girl English, during the long winter evenings, which she was now making useful.

The clouds broke away; and the "stony promontory of Reykjavik" gleamed in the bursts of sunlight, as the companies disappeared along its narrow path, sending back, through an atmosphere clear as ever

fanned the lungs of man or beast, the crack of the whip, and the clatter of hoofs.

Fording the Salmon River, and on through the lovely vale of Söljadialr, beside its crystal stream, they galloped rapidly, "the curlew and the plover piping their melancholy notes from the damp hollows sprinkled here and there."

As the day wore away, they defiled from the gorge of the Almanne-Gja into Thingvalla, and halted near the parsonage. The rain came down, and the tents went up. A little later, and the king's servants in red coats were preparing supper in the corner of a stone wall, in a fireplace among the rocks; the royal silver "scarcely distinguished, in the twilight, from republican tin" in the American camp.

Christian IX. was quite at ease, replying to salutations with one hand, while the other held a piece of bread or meat.

A pleasant day may be passed in this grand valley, among the numberless chasms, in whose fathomless depths of clear, imprisoned water glide young trout, whose only entrance there must have been by subterranean channels far below, connecting with the lake half a mile away. The ragged borders and the mouths of caverns are fringed with beautiful lichens, mosses, and two or three varieties of modest flowers, smiling in the gloom,—beauty on the bosom of gigantic strength.

The next night's encampment was by the Great Geyser, where the exhibitions of the boiling, up-springing floods were enjoyed by their royal proprietor, and at the same time by the republicans, who

had sailed over a wider sea than he had crossed, to see them.

While here, the king, with his attendants, ascended a hill, where he carved on the lava-rock his royal monogram.

“ Among the visitors who came in from the scattered farms were several sick persons, who had made long visits, in the hope of finding a physician in the king’s suite. Disappointed in this, they turned to Dr. Hayes and Dr. Hjaltalin. The first case was a man suffering from Bright’s Disease ; for which, unfortunately, we had no medicines. But the medicine-chest, when it was opened, attracted the visitors with a singular power.

“ Soon afterwards came a married couple, the mother carrying a baby ; which, as it needed but a glance to see, was almost dying of croup. They had carried the poor child on horseback for five hours, in the hope of finding relief. There was no time to be lost. Hot baths and poultices were ordered at the byre near at hand, and in the mean time an opiate was administered. The gasping and writhing of the child was too much for those strong Icelandic men. The mother stood, calm and firm, holding it ; but Zoega ran away in one direction, and Eyvindur in another, crying like children ; and the farmers turned aside their heads to hide their tears.

“ At the byre, nothing could exceed the kindness of the farmer’s family ; in fact, of all who could help. The king’s purveyor furnished white bread for a poultice ; a hot bath was made ready ; and the father stuffed the child’s clothes into his bosom, to

keep them warm for it. All night the people watched with it; and the next morning everybody looked happy on hearing that its condition had somewhat improved."

Aug. 6 the tents were struck, and the processions were on the march to Thingvalla.

When the sun hung low upon its heights, the scene was rare as it was striking. Along the base of Almanne-Gja, tents were pitched upon the green slopes; on the river-bank were four large pavilions, flanked with smaller ones; from the Mount of Laws shot up a flagstaff, with the new banner, a white falcon on ground of blue, streaming in the evening breeze; opposite, towards the cataract of the Ayas, was the platform gayly festooned, and shaded with the interlocking flags of the nationalities represented at the jubilee. Up and down the valley, upon grassy elevations, were grouped the thousands of people, and over them banners were flying; camp-fires sent up their lazy columns of smoke; while ringing laughter, and shouts of merriment, echoed along the munition of rocks.

Before the entrance of the grand pavilion, was one of the most impressive occasions of the jubilee. It was the singing, by the choir, of Mr. Jochumsson's "Minni Konung's á Thingvelli," or, "The King's Welcome to Thingvalla."

It was sung to the fine Danish air, "King Christian lays aside his Sword."

THE KING'S WELCOME TO THINGVALLA.

I.

With strong foot tread the holy ground,
 Our snow-land's king, the lofty-hearted,
 Who from thy royal home has parted,
 To greet these hills that guard us round!
 Our freedom's scroll thy hand has lent us,
 The first of kings whom God has sent us,
 Hail! welcome to our country's heart!

II.

Land's-father, here the Law-Mount view!
 Behold God's works in all their vastness!
 Where sawest thou Freedom's fairer fastness,
 With fire-heaved ramparts, waters blue?
 Here sprang the sagas of our splendor;
 Here every Iceland heart is tender:
 God built this altar for his flock!

III.

Here, as in thousand years of old,
 Sound the same words, a voice unended,
 As when their life and law defended
 The spearmen with their shields of gold:
 The same land yet the same speech giveth,
 The ancient soul of Freedom liveth,
 And hither, king, we welcome thee!

IV.

But now are past a thousand years,
 As in the people's memory hoarded,
 And in God's volume stand recorded
 Their strife and trial, woes and fears;
 Now let the hope of better ages
 Be what thy presence, king, presages!
 Now let the prosperous time be sure!

V.

Our land to thee her thanks shall yield,
 A thousand years thy name be chanted,
 Here, where the Hill of Law is planted,
 'Twixt fiery fount and lava-field:
 We pray All-Father, our dependence,
 To bless thee and thy far descendants,
 And those they rule, a thousand years!

The effect was powerful and very apparent. Calm, almost expressionless eyes grew bright, and the flush of excitement rose on many cheeks. The guests then moved into the spacious tent; and an excellent breakfast was served, in which Icelandic salmon, and other fish of native waters, reminded them of soil on which the tables were spread.

Thomsson of Bessestad made the opening speech in Danish.

“ He repeated the old legend of the first discoverer of Iceland meeting a dragon, a bull breathing flame, and a giant coming down from the mountains with an iron staff, all three of which the hero must overcome before he could possess the land; and then, likening Christian IX. to the hero, left us in doubt as to whom or what was typified by the three monsters. The compliment to the king found the Icelanders warmed, and prepared to receive it; and the end was his majesty’s health, with nine tremendous cheers. The king returned thanks, with evident feeling, and gave as a toast, ‘Prosperity to sublime Iceland !’

“ After a health to Queen Louise of Denmark, proposed by Chief-Justice Jonasson, Eirikr Magnússen made the speech of the occasion. It was in Icelandic; but the rich rhythm and resonance of the ancient tongue were a delight to the ear. Its contrast with the previous Danish speeches was surprising. The natives present kindled and warmed as the speaker proceeded, until there was a burst of ‘Bravo !’ after almost every sentence. In fact, in spite of the open loyalty of the speech, it was power-

fully calculated to arouse the national pride. Magnússon spoke of the Icelanders as being themselves of kingly blood, as obedient only to honor and honesty, and as claiming an equal measure of respect with that they yielded. His words were manly, not defiant. The very beginning of the address, 'Sir King,' instead of 'Your Majesty,' struck the old independent keynote; and the close, hoping that the second thousand years of Iceland's history might find the same dynasty in power, was only uttered after a distinct declaration of what was expected from the dynasty in the mean time."

Never before had those turreted walls looked down on such a gathering; for not till then, since the fire-waves surged over them, and sunk the molten floor a hundred feet or more, had a jubilee filled their dark embrasures with sounds of peaceful gladness. From Scandinavian, French, and American hearts, in fullest sympathy, they rose upon the evening air. The king and his party now appeared in the arena, escorted by a body of *bonder*, or landholders, picked men in standing and stature, who had met him a mile away. These twelve grave men formed in two lines of six along the path through which his majesty re-entered the historic spot. The brief address of welcome by Fredriksson, chairman of the committee, called forth cheers so frequent and vociferous, that the ponies, unaccustomed to such demonstrations, displayed their resentment by sudden tangents from the arena; Gov. Finssen's steed tossing him unceremoniously from the saddle; while the king, who is said to be an accomplished rider, quieted his by

gently patting the neck of the animal, who seemed to understand perfectly the wishes of his illustrious master, or appreciate the honor of bearing royalty on the great occasion. Before the king, marched twenty-four young ladies, scattering Iceland's wild flowers—anemone, thyme, and saxifrage—in his pathway; while the choir, standing on the lava-floor not far distant, sang a sacred chant, completing the beautiful and thrilling sights and sounds, which moved the most stolid of the spectators.

The formal address of Iceland to her king was read by Herr Thornssen of Bessestad, expressing both loyalty and undisguised desire for enlarged freedom in the administration of home affairs. Christian's response was brief but gratifying, followed by cheers and the national anthem of Denmark.

After an interval of rest, the usual services of such occasions followed,—the speeches of delegates, presentation of elegantly engrossed addresses from kindred nations, literary societies, and art academies.

Rain! rain! was Nature's order of the day, but this evidently did not disturb the equanimity of the Danish king; for, at one o'clock, his cavalcade stood in order, the long line of ponies impatient for the homeward march of seventy miles, before the midnight sun went down.

When the royal party reached the shadows of Almanne-Gjá, in them stood the choir, who had gone before to await his coming, and sing a parting song. Strange and impressive farewell! Over king and singers hung the lava battlement; behind them, the

deserted, grand old court-room of the ancient republic; before them, the narrow gorge through the Gjá; while the sounding melody floated over all, and died away in vanishing echoes upon the eternal solitudes. A gracious bow, and, one by one, the kingly suite disappear in a winding, ascending path; the last act in the Millennial Jubilee is over; and Thingvalla returns to the deep quietude of ages.

There is an Icelandic national song, composed by a former governor of the northern province of the island, Biarni Thorarensen, when he was far away from his home, completing his studies at the University of Copenhagen. It is called, and very appropriately, the "Remembrance of Iceland," and is sung to the music of "God save the Queen;" which, curiously enough, the Icelanders have adopted as their national air. We give a literal prose translation, in English, of a stanza, which expresses beautifully patriotic sentiments expressed in the flowing, rhythmic music of the original. The words are:—

"Eldgamla Isafold
Astkaera föstermold,
Fyallkonan fríd!
Mögum thín muntu kaer,
Medan lönd girdir saer
Og gumar girnast maer;
Gljár sól á hlíd."

Old land of ice,
Dearly beloved native land,
Fair maid of the mountains,
Dear thou shalt be to thy sons
As long as men love women,
Or sun-gleam falls on the hillside!

The tribute of Dr. Hayes to the musical powers of the Icelanders, in connection with a serenade to the king while at the governor's house, is very beautiful: "This was the first occasion on which I had ever heard an Icelandic song; and, while already struck with the great sweetness of the language in conversation, I was now more than ever captivated by it when used in song. The singers, who were not accompanied by any musical instrument, were a dozen in number, and were led by a blacksmith, who certainly has a most remarkable voice. Several national songs were sung in a most excellent and stirring manner; and the king was evidently moved by the earnestness with which these simple people greeted him. Hitherto I had regarded the Icelanders as a rude race of fishermen; but here I discovered men with natural, inborn refinement, with true delicacy of feeling, and possessing marvellous skill in vocal music. So much was the king pleased, that he came down among the crowd, shook hands with the song-loving blacksmith and his brother singers, and thanked them all with genuine heartiness. After this the crowd dispersed, and all was quiet in the sunlit night, save the sound of ripples breaking on the beach, and of the ship's bells striking the hours and half-hours of the watch. When I went aboard I took a book, and, on deck, could read distinctly at midnight."

Thirty years ago the government of Denmark began to exhibit some sense of returning justice towards Iceland, more neglected than any other of her island-provinces. Hope of better days stirred

the noble heart of Jón Sigurdson, whose deep interest in the people has endeared him to Iceland. His influential leadership, in the direction of reform, secured the new constitution which the king brought with him to the Millennial. This document was divided into seven chapters, and each of these into as many or more paragraphs.

The Althing, which sits every other year for six weeks, unless the royal edict is interposed to change the time or dissolve the assembly, followed by a new election, is composed of thirty deputies, elected by the people for six years ; and six chosen by the king. There is an upper and lower house ; the former composed of the royal six, and an equal number selected by the thirty from their number ; the latter comprises the twenty-four left of the thirty members. The legislative power is in the hands of the king and Althing ; the executive authority, in those of the monarch alone ; and the judicial power belongs exclusively to the judges. Iceland has no representation at Copenhagen, and has no share in the expenses of the realm. The governor of the island is appointed by the king.

The Althing manages entirely the financial affairs of the island. Two-thirds of either house make a quorum.

While the Lutheran is the State Church, liberty of conscience is secured.

Many of the provisions touching education, freedom of the press, the poor, and other public interests and personal rights, are excellent. It is true, the king holds the reins firmly in his royal hand ; but

the constitution marks a promising era in the history of Iceland, and may wake up a people from death-like slumber, after holding a commanding position by the force of their own intellectual energy, to a future more worthy of its glorious past, and present possibilities.

Upon the return to Reykjavik, Dr. Hayes accepted the king's invitation to call upon him at the governor's residence. A description of the interview we give from his own ready pen : —

“ I was, at half-past one, ushered in to the king by his courteous adjutant, Hedemann ; or, rather, the king ushered himself into my presence. For while I was passing the compliments of the day with the adjutant, waiting an opportunity to be announced, the king, hearing my voice, opened the door himself, and greeted me with a cheerful ‘ Good-morning,’ and a cordial grasp of the hand.

“ I was more than ever impressed with his kindly disposition, and inborn courtesy of manner ; qualities which, always noticeable anywhere in anybody, are particularly likely to attract attention when shown by a king, among a people not accustomed to the ways of kings. Hence his great popularity with the Icelanders.

“ The governor's house is a tolerably commodious building, two stories high, and whitewashed. In front of it there is a sloping garden of more than a quarter of an acre ; where patches of fresh green grass alternate with rows of lettuce, cabbage, radishes, and potatoes, but no flowers. Plenty of them there are, however, in the windows, peeping from

underneath the snow-white curtains ; and they have a very cheerful look. The hallway is narrow, and, while the king is there, is guarded by a sentinel in a badly-fitting red coat with silver buttons and a sergeant's sword. The adjutant's room is at the end of the hallway, and looks out upon the rear. The king's reception-room is to the right, and is about forty feet by twenty. It is not carpeted ; but there is a fine rug in the centre of it, and other small ones here and there. I like this very common Danish custom of clean floors, and the absence of dirty carpets.

“ In the centre, was a neat mahogany table ; and some old, well-polished mahogany chairs stood about here and there. There were two or three smaller tables, a writing-desk, a few engravings on the wall, — one of the king, and another of the queen of Denmark ; and, in general, that was all. The walls were papered with a plain white paper ; and nothing could be more simple and unregal than this present abode of royalty. The king was attired in a common and rather well-worn walking-dress. He struck me as having a good deal of the English gentleman about him. He is a good horseman, is fond of shooting, takes long walks, and dresses plainly. I am told, that, in his domestic life, his tastes and habits are extremely simple ; and I should think so from what I observed.

“ I asked him about the new constitution.

“ ‘ I hope,’ said he, in reply, ‘ this new constitution will give satisfaction to the people of Iceland. They are a fine people, and their prosperity is very dear to me. In all constitutional governments, the people

must have a systematic representation, and a local form of administration ; and this, I think, the new constitution grants them.'

" ' If your majesty please,' I continued, ' might I ask how it is that the new government differs from the old ? '

" The king answered with great frankness, ' By the new constitution, there is given to Iceland (which hitherto had only a consultative influence over its own affairs, through its Althing) a full power of legislation and taxation ; while the affairs of Iceland were formerly divided between the bureaus of different ministers in Denmark. Iceland has now her own special minister, to whose portfolio belongs all that concerns the island ; while such affairs as concern Denmark and Iceland in common continue to be in the hands of the Danish legislature.'

" I took the liberty of asking the specific nature of their common affairs.

" ' Such as concern the dynasty, intercourse with foreign powers, and the ordinary regulations of commerce.'

" ' Then the Icelanders are quite free, as concerns their local legislation ? '

" ' Quite so, in fact ; and I think the new arrangement will work for their prosperity and good. It is with this hope that I have undertaken this voyage to Iceland, at the time when the new arrangement comes into operation. Iceland has a great history, and her resources are large enough to give her a great future ; and this, taken in connection with this celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the country,

makes the mission doubly interesting and important to me.'

"I spoke then of the manifestations of loyalty which I had everywhere witnessed.

"It has, of course, not escaped me. I think the Icelanders understand me, and appreciate my intentions.'

"The king said, 'No one ever doubted the thorough loyalty of Iceland.' He was thankful for the cordial greeting he had met with since he had first landed. He was proud to be the first of the Danish kings who had visited the island ; and he hoped that the new constitution which he had brought with him would promote the prosperity of the country, and more strongly than ever cement the bond which unites Iceland with Denmark.

"The king is a capital speaker ; his voice is good, and his manner hearty and pleasing ; and is handsome ; and is fifty-six, and the father of the future king of Denmark, the present king of Greece, the sometime-to-be queen consort of England, and the czarina of Russia, he does not look forty-five."

Of the new constitution, Icelanders said, "Well, it is a good step in the right direction, and an entering wedge for something better." Others spoke more warmly, declaring "it would be all right enough, if we were rid of this Danish governor and the royal spies." This hopeful unrest is the position of a people pursuing their simple avocations, with no occasion for military force or police, and no reason why the treasury of Denmark should receive so large a portion of their scanty earnings upon the stormy

deep, and along the valleys which afford scarcely more than pasture for their flocks and herds.

Attention has been called, within a few years, to the vast sulphur-fields, the largest of which are at Krisuvik, called by a distinguished writer on Iceland's mineral resources "a mine of wealth." These could furnish the market of the world with their staple, and may yet open a remunerative trade to both the people and those who inaugurate the enterprise.

Mr. Bushby, an Englishman with a shrewd foresight, some time ago purchased the Krisuvik Mountain, securing a large district. A passable road could be greatly improved, connecting it with Grundevik, on the coast, lying south-west from Reykjavik, across the Guldbringe Syssel.

Along the Breida Fiord, on the north-west coast, the French fisheries number over two hundred and fifty vessels, employing seven thousand men.

In the south-west corner of the Guldbringe Syssel, near Buela, is Iceland's *coal-mine*, the "Surturbrund;" ledges of bituminous wood, evidently formed by the accumulation of drift-wood in the ages past, brought there by the Gulf Stream from America, and the current that sets in from the northern coast of Asia. These ocean-rivers have floated down to treeless Iceland materials for building and fuel,—a very providential provision for their supply. Prof. Bjarnasson furnishes some notes of interest on these mineral resources.

"As for the sulphur-mines in Iceland, there are very important ones in two places: the Krisuvíkir-

námur (the mines of Krisuvík), on the southern coast of the great peninsula, limiting the south side of the Faxaflói (the gulf of Faxi); and the various mines in the *Pingeyjarsýrla, in north-east of Iceland (Hlíðarnámur, Fremrinámur, Peystareykjanámur, Kroflunámur), in the vicinity of the volcano Krafla and the lake Mývatn. I cannot tell how valuable those mines are; but according to a statement of Prof. Johnstrup of Copenhagen, who, sent by the government in 1871, made a journey to Iceland to examine the mines in the Pingeyjarsýrla, some of them, especially the Hlíðarnámur,—the mines of Hlid, Reykjahlid, a noted farm on the north-eastern shore of Mývatn (the lake of gnats), must be of very great value. Those northern mines of Iceland the government rented to an Englishman, Alfred Loch, for a term of fifty years. But this rent is very low, and much lower than it had been proposed by the Alping, the renter having only to pay fifty pounds sterling the first year; the second year ten pounds more, &c.; adding ten pounds to the amount every year for five years, when the rent has amounted to a hundred pounds, which rent is to be paid for forty-four years. Security of only five thousand Danish Rigsdalers was asked. In connection with this it ought to be observed, that in the sixteenth century, in the reign of the Danish King Frederick II., the government began to work those mines; and then the surplus of the production of them in one year was ten thousand Rigsdalers. As you know, there is in some places, especially in the western part of

* p=th.

the country, a kind of coal called surbarbrandur ; but hitherto it has been of no use, caused by the great difficulty of transportation ; and in 1871, the common species of coal has been discovered in the Mýrasýsla. Lime is found in Mount Esja in the vicinity of Reykjavík ; and surely it is to be had in many more places ; and the Iceland calcareous spar (called "silfurberg," which means silverstone) is found in great quantities in the Helgusladafjall (the mountain of Helgurtadir, a farm thus named) in the "Reydarfjordur," the largest of the fiords in the eastern coast of the country. This mine has been wrought in the last decennaries, but without energy."

Emigration from Iceland ! and that after ten centuries without any thing of the kind, beyond colonizing Greenland, and a few other similar attempts elsewhere by the old vikings. It evidently is the turn of the tide in Icelandic national life ; and no one can see the end of the movement. It may yet leave the historic isle a memorial only of past marvels of prowess and progress ; in whose sheltered coves, and along whose fiords, the fishermen alone will have their habitations.

We are glad to put on record the views of an intelligent Icelander, and of an American Norseman, on this quiet yet significant exodus.

Writes Prof. Bjarnasson : "I answer your letter in great haste, being very busy in writing and sending my last letters to Iceland this year. I am of the opinion, that the future of Iceland will be happier and brighter than its past for many centuries. Although its new constitution, this year granted by

the King of Denmark, does not fulfil the wishes of the people, and in some points may be very deficient, it will make the Icelanders able to develop their abilities to a much higher degree than they have been allowed to do hitherto. The resources of the country, though very few, being mainly raising sheep, and fishing, must be able to yield much larger quantities of support than at this time. The want of knowledge of practical sciences has hindered those resources from being developed. The government in past times has entirely neglected the country in that respect; but at present the Icelanders are convinced of the necessity of rapid improvements in that branch of their national education; and the legislative power now bestowed upon the general assembly (Alping, Althing) makes them able to amend this want. The people have got a great deal more courage to act than before, and are not obliged to look for assistance in its social and political progress only to the Danish government, as they have begun to be acquainted with some other foreign countries and nations than that of Denmark. The study of the national tongue and literature among the scholars of Iceland is making great progress; and the literature has increased considerably in the last years.

“ Notwithstanding those bright prospects, I think the emigration from Iceland, commenced years ago, will continue. The emigration only confirms the assertion, that the people have more courage and inclination to act than ever before. The horizon of the common people of Iceland has been extended, and they are longing for better circumstances than

those of their past. The emigrants wish a more rapid progress in their social and economical matters than may be hoped for at home. Therefore they emigrate to America. The number of the Icelandic emigrants in America last winter was about two hundred ; and of those about one-half lived in Canada (Ontario), and the rest in the United States, mainly in different places of Wisconsin and Michigan. This summer about three hundred and sixty emigrants came from Iceland, most of them settling in Canada."

Prof. Anderson, whose father came to America in the first ship which brought Norse emigrants to its shores, and who has "consecrated his life to the North European or Gothic languages, history, and literature," adds,—

" The Icelanders began to emigrate to America, their ancient Vinland, in 1872 ; and there are now about one thousand in this country, half of whom are in Wisconsin, and the other half in Canada. Four thoroughly educated Icelanders are among this number,— Prof. Jón Bjarnasson, who is now in Luther College, Decorah, Io. ; Paul Thorackson, who is preparing for the ministry in St. Louis, Mo. ; Olafur Olafsson, a mechanic (a self-made man) ; and Jón Olafsson, a poet, who was compelled to leave Iceland on account of his strong republican tendencies. He is a thoroughly educated man, and writes poetry of the highest order. The last two, Olafur Olafsson and Jón Olafsson, have been furnished means by a gentleman in New York, and have gone to Alaska, to see whether that would not prove an excellent place

for the Icelanders to make a settlement in; but I have grave doubts about this Alaska business: I mean, about its expediency. It may, however, look better in time. It is said that our government intends to give active co-operation, and much depends on this.

“So long as Denmark does not make Iceland perfectly independent, I think the Icelandic emigration will increase; and I see no hopes that more will be done voluntarily, at any early day, than was done last 2d of August, when the Danish king gave the island a new constitution. It is my opinion, however, that, if the Icelanders were left to themselves, they would become satisfied, and Iceland would soon have five hundred thousand, instead of seventy thousand inhabitants. The island is large, and has great resources that are yet undeveloped. Their fisheries, for instance, might alone return a revenue of millions and millions, instead of the paltry thousands that are now realized. A nation in which every man *is educated* (and such is the case in Iceland) has great possibilities, if it is let alone; and we may yet see a unique republic thrive in the floating sanctuary of Gothic liberty, poetry, and literature.”

It is not impossible that the locomotive may yet mingle its steam with that of sulphur mountains in Iceland. Although now only horses carry burdens, enterprise may yet build short railways from those exhaustless mines to the nearest ports. Stranger things have been done already in remote lands, until the “iron horse, whose sinews are of steel, and whose provender is fire,” thunders over Asiatic plains and Egyptian deserts.

Already the telegraph has been in prospect. In influential quarters in England, a North-Atlantic line from Scotland to the Faroes, two hundred and fifty miles; thence to Iceland, three hundred and fifty more; next touching Greenland, five hundred farther; and landing the American end of the cable on the coast of Labrador,— has been earnestly advocated.

Sixty years ago, among prominent statesmen, a scheme for the annexation of Iceland to England was agitated; an arrangement which would give that realm resources of vast importance, and bind together kindred nations. Such a transfer of allegiance, however, seems now quite improbable. And yet, amid the increasing changes in political and social existence, along with impending crises whose results no political seer can estimate, the future of a deeply interesting, but hitherto almost unknown and unmolested people, can only be the object of purest speculation.

But whatever there may be in the future, of progress and increased intercourse with nations of greater commercial activity and social refinement, it is to be devoutly hoped, that the vices of outside civilizations will not weaken the sterling integrity of the prevailing character of the people, nor their simple, intelligent faith in God. Material growth at the expense of moral stamina has always been the fascinating, deceptive process of national decay and death.

We copy, as a curiosity of the kind, a poster of the third public service, which was very conspicuous along the streets of Reykjavik, before the Millennial Jubilee.

THE THIRD ACT OF THE MILLENNIAL DRAMA.

PJODHATID.

á

OSKJU HLID

2an August, 1874.

Kl. 3½ e. m.

safnast menn saman á Austurvelli, eg er ætlast til, ad menn gangi
padan I fylking,

6 i röd, a hatldarstadinn.

Kl. 4-6½ e. m.

Rædur og söngvar.

Kl. 6½-11½ e. m.

Skemtanir, svo sem söngur, hljódfærasláttur.

dans, o. fl.

Kl. 11½ e. m.

Flugeldar miklir

á

LITLU-OSKJUHLID.

Sjerhver, sem sækir hâtídna, og óskar ad vera fyrir innan hid hreinsada svædi, fullordnir edur börn, eru skyldir ad bera merki, er kostar 16 sk., og fæst keypt í sölubúdum herra Consul M. Smitos og hera kaupmanns V. Fishers, hèr í bænum.

It was, of course, after the fashion of all posters, in very large and very small letters. The following is the translation :—

NATION'S HIGH TIDE (THJODHATID)

At Oskjuhlid (Basket Slope Hill,)

August 2, 1874,

at 3½ P. M.,

the people will gather together at the east wall (Austervelli), and it is meant that the people go thence in procession, six abreast, to the festin place.

From 4 to 6½ o'clock,
Speeches and Songs.

From 6½ to 11½,
Amusements, such as Songs, Music, Dancing, &c.

From 11½,
Fireworks (Flugeldar Miklir); literally, great flying fires.

Each one who seeks the high tide, and wishes to be inside the cleared space, must wear a badge, which costs 16 skillings (8 cents.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Millennial at the West. — Norsemen in Prairie-Land. — First Icelandic Service. — The Sermon. — Speeches. — Banners. — My Native Land.

A NORSE millennial in Prairie-land! The cycles of history are forever mocking all human wisdom, and bringing, in their sweep, impressive or startling surprises.

The descendants of the vikings of many centuries ago are seeking a home, not only on a continent their galleys touched before the parents of Columbus were born, but among the relics of races of whose origin, and of whose advent here, no records can tell us; their mute, uninscribed mounds as yet giving no certain answer to the questioning of the antiquarian.

Aug. 2, 1874, the Norse population residing in and near Milwaukee, including about seventy native Icelanders, gathered in the Danish Lutheran Church of Pastor Gulmuyder.

The usual service introduced the sermon by Prof. Jón Bjarnasson. An outline of this first Icelandic sermon upon his native island, by one born and educated there, will have an interest independent of any views of a purely religious character; the more so, as even these represent the prevailing sentiment

of the people, and not of a single or several ecclesiastical organizations.

He preached from the text appointed for all the ministers of Iceland as their theme on the Millennial Sunday. It is found in the Book of Psalms, xc. 1-4, 12-17. He showed how Jehovah had been the refuge of the Icelanders during all the generations for the thousand years since the settlement of their island; that the people, few in numbers, like Israel in olden time, had been kept, in a wonderful manner, from destruction. In illustration, he noticed some of the most important events in the history of Iceland, from the land-taking (*land-nam*) time to the present. In the heathen age, the forefathers were led away from their native land, to the cold and lonely island in the great northern ocean, that they might be taught their own weakness, as compared with his omnipotent grace. It was just the right place to tame the proud viking race, trusting in their own might and strength. It was also a resting-place for the heroes, weary with fighting and the tumults of war. The Pagan religion prevailed in Iceland long enough to prepare the people, by softening their hearts, and awakening a longing for Christ's redeeming word. To show how near the most educated Icelanders in the first century of their history were to Christianity, he referred to Ingemund the Old, the heathen, who, dying, prayed God to pardon his enemy who had slain him; and Thorkel Ulaane, who would worship no other god but Him who had created the sun, and in his death prayed to the Father of light that he should be a light unto his spirit in the darkness of death.

In brief outline, the events in Icelandic history, after the introduction of Christianity, were sketched ; the establishment and development of a governmental system, which is gradually becoming more and more recognized among the civilized nations of the earth, as *the* one which, in its fundamental principles, better than any other corresponds with the spirit and spread of Christianity ; the creation and preservation of wise statutes, the main pillars of a free and progressive commonwealth, and which, in new forms, have been called to life among some of the noblest and mightiest nations of the earth. The discovery of America, the new world of civilization and Christianity, was no unimportant part of the mission of the Norsemen. And now, just at the close of the first period of a thousand years, Jehovah called to the children of the land once more with his mighty voice, “Come again !” This voice they had to obey ; and thus Icelanders had returned to America ; and on this day a little band were gathered here, also, in the far-off America, to praise the Lord for their history through the many bygone centuries ; and with pious devotion to get new courage, a rejuvenated strength of faith, to work in the future ; and, by a Christian life in this land, call back to memory the recollection of the first visit of Icelanders to this part of the world, in a brighter and fairer light.

And then the treasures of literature, especially in history and poetry, which had been produced in the poorest and most isolated country in Christendom, had been written in their own pure and powerful ver-

nacular ; and that, too, in an age when the European nations generally were in a state of mental lethargy, and Christianity withered among the nations ; when the little that was written was composed in a foreign tongue that had long been dead, and which the mass of the people did not understand. The Icelandic language contained the key to the history of the dark middle ages.

Passing over to the evil days of Iceland, when its liberty was taken away, Prof. Bjarnasson spoke feelingly of his native island, in its time of trouble and misfortune ; but pointed with pride to the fact, that the Church of Christ had perhaps never flourished more at any time, than just during the saddest period of political oppression.

God had also spoken to the Icelanders through volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, inundations, destructive epidemics, famines. His voice in the elements had been loud and clear ; and through all these things he had drawn the heart of the Icelanders to himself. It was a wonderful miracle, that, in view of all oppression from an unfriendly government, and the inclemency of the elements, the Icelandic people still existed, and could praise the holy name of God, after a life of one thousand years. The professor's sermon was very eloquent and interesting.

After the service at the church, the Icelanders congregated outside the church, to move in procession to a park which they previously had engaged for the festivities of this day. The procession was led by two standard-bearers, clad in the recently

restored Icelandic costume, which is very pretty and appropriate. One of them carried the star-spangled banner, the other the national Icelandic banner, which represents the “*falco Islandicus*” on a sky-blue background. The standard-bearers were followed by the men and then the women; some clad in their classical and poetical *skaut*-costume, while others wore their no less elegant and becoming cap-dress. There being free admission to the park for everybody, a large number, in addition to the Icelanders, congregated, chiefly of Scandinavians. The flags were placed in an appropriate place, and the people rested a while. The *skaut* is a large white head-dress.

After a brief interval of rest, the celebrated Icelandic poet and republican, *Jón Olafsson*, ascended the tribune, and delivered the speech of the day. He recounted, in appropriate words, the political events in the history of Iceland, and grew especially eloquent when he spoke of its struggle for independence during the last century; which, in spite of the new constitution that had been given to Iceland this year by the Danish king, certainly would be continued in the future. He wished the dear land of their fathers success and prosperity in this struggle, and asked for the blessings of heaven for the Icelandic nation; and, finally, requested all present to drink a cup of gladness for Iceland, which was done with repeated shouts of “*Hurrah!*” Then an earnest speech was delivered by *Olafur Olafsson*, in regard to the Icelanders who have emigrated to America; encouraging them to preserve unity and brotherly love

towards each other. The theological student, *Paul Thirlaksson*, spoke in Norse for America, the adopted land of the emigrated Icelanders. He called attention to the Norsemen, as that part of the American people which the Icelanders especially ought to regard as their brothers and friends ; first, on account of the old relationship, but not less, because they (the Norsemen) had received the Icelanders in this country with open arms and cordial friendship. He closed by expressing their most hearty thanks of his countrymen to the Norsemen. For this speech, the Rev. Gulmuyder, with thanks in behalf of the Norsemen, in well-chosen words wished the Icelanders success and prosperity in America. Then the audience was addressed by Prof. *Jón Bjarnasson*, who spoke of the Icelandic tongue, encouraging his countrymen to esteem it an honor to preserve the dialect, in this land also, as pure as possible. Finally, *Jón Olafsson* ascended the tribune the second time, to remind the Icelanders of some very notable foreigners, who, in these later times, had turned up as friends of Iceland, — the celebrated poet, *Bjornstjerne Björnson*, who, by his excellent articles about Iceland in “*Norsk Folkeblad*,” had awakened so great interest in Norway for the people in their renewed political struggle. But especially did he speak of the scholars in America who during this year had shown so much attention, and done so great honor, to Iceland, by sending to that remote island a large collection of books. Prof. *W. Fisk*, of Cornell University, in Ithaca, N.Y., was the one scholarly American who had done the most in this matter ; and, among the

Norsemen, Prof. *R. B. Anderson* of the University of Wisconsin, in Madison. Both were warmly interested in Iceland and its future history. They had both been invited to the Millennial, but were unable to gladden the hearts of their Icelandic friends by their presence. Therefore, before the celebration closed, three rousing cheers for these honored friends of Iceland were given. Theirs was the last toast, and it was drunk with intense enthusiasm. Between the speeches several Icelandic songs were sung, and some of the Scandinavians took part in these. During the celebration the most perfect order prevailed ; and, about nine o'clock in the evening, all went home in excellent spirits, having celebrated the FIRST Icelandic festival in the New World with far greater success than was anticipated by the most sanguine Icelander or Norseman.

Prof. Anderson's address was an eloquent tribute. He said,—

“ It is a source of great pleasure to me, that I have an opportunity to speak to my Icelandic friends on this their day of festivity.

“ I have for several years spent a part of my leisure hours in studying the songs and Sagas of your ancestors ; but I never ventured even to hope that it ever should be permitted me to speak face to face with the descendants of Ingolf and Lief, and, least of all, here in the remote West. It is not more than a year since I met the first Icelander. I visited him in his own home in La Crosse. I had an opportunity to talk with him about Iceland and its Sagas ; and heard, for the first time in my life, the language of

my ancestors. He was friendly and hospitable; but what interested me most of all was, that he actually was an *Icelander*.

“Since then, I have had the honor and pleasure of receiving visits from several excellent Icelanders; and among these are, especially, your celebrated skáld and *republican* Jón Olafsson, and your thorough linguist and theologian Paul Thorlackson, who is no less genial as a companion than he is proficient in his scholarship. I need not assure you that I value their visits very highly, and that both of them completely have won my heart.

“I love the Icelanders, because they are of the same blood as I am. The Icelanders and Norsemen are *one* people; they are brothers who have now been separated just a thousand years; and what a remarkable event it is, that we now meet again in the distant *Vesterheim* (America)!

“I love them for the spirit of freedom and independence which they manifested when after the battle of Hafrsfjord, when Harald Haarfagr usurped the freehold tenure of property from the peasants, they sacrificed every thing to protect their liberties, and chose to leave their fertile farms in Norway, risk their lives on the stormy sea, and settle down amid the jokulls, glaciers, volcanoes, lava-streams, geysers, and gravel-deserts of Iceland, rather than to surrender their *udal-right* to Harald Haarfagr. They demonstrated the truth of the principles laid down in Odin's High Song in the Elder Edda, where it is said, —

‘One’s own house is better,
Though it be humble :
Each man is master at home.
Though a man own but
Two goats, and a willow-thatched house,
’Tis better than begging.
The man’s heart bleedeth
At every meal-time,
Who his food beggeth.’

And standing here, as we do, face to face with Icelanders, we Norsemen cannot but feel a sense of shame in behalf of *our* ancestors, when we reflect that they did not manifest the same love of liberty as your own.

“I love and respect the Icelanders, because in spite of the severe climate, the long winters, when the sun nearly or entirely disappeared from above the horizon, and nothing but streaks of northern lights painted the colors of the rainbow on their gloomy sky, they produced skálds and saga-men, who look in vain for their peers among all the nations of the earth. By this they gave evidence to the human race, that it is *liberty* that unfolds the blossoms of poetry and literature. Was it not in the time of the republic, that the literature of Greece blossomed most luxuriantly? Were not the most celebrated Roman authors produced in the time of the Roman republic? Search the history of the world through and through, and you will find that liberty is the grand elixir that has blessed the nations of the earth. Nay, where thrives aught good and beautiful and great in slavery? Smother the pasture, and the grass will not grow green ; bind the eagle, and it will die on its lofty pinnacle ; dam the stream, that hastens

in its musical meanderings to the sea, and it will soon turn into a putrid pool. Nature, strong and free, hates all bondage. Can, then, the fountains of the spirit, the flights of thought, endure bondage? Shall truth only shine beautifully, locked up in its own heart, like lamenting Aladdin in his narrow cave?

‘No press! lift thy valiant arms,
Free the world, in all thy wrath,
From bondage.’

“Because the Icelanders preserved the spirit of freedom, their island became a sacred sanctuary in which the old Gothic literature was preserved.

“Yes, Iceland has a literature, which will yet be loved and admired throughout the world. The time will come, when Saemund’s Edda and Snorri’s Edda, Heimskringla, Njálla, Egill, Skallagrims Saga, Laxdæla, and Grætti’s Saga, will be found in the house of every man of culture and letters over all the earth.

“In connection with this, I will add that Iceland has reason to be proud of its excellent sons which it has fostered in modern times. Vigfusson and Eirkur Magnusson and Jón Hjabtalin are worthy representatives of your race in England and Scotland. The world-famed sculptor, Albert Thorwaldsen, was an Icelander. A friend of me and of you, Prof. Fiske, recently wrote that he regards Jon Sigurdsson as one of the most remarkable men now living; worthy of being placed by the side of Gladstone in England, as a scholar and a statesman. Permit me to propose three cheers for this noblest man among

the Icelanders, on this your millennial celebration. Long may he live! Permit me also to remind you on this your day of festivity, of the German scholars, Konrad Maurer and Theodore Moebius, the Englishman Dr. Dasent, and the American Prof. Fiske. I name these foreigners to-day, for they have all distinguished themselves by their successful cultivation of the Icelandic literature and history.

“I love and respect the Icelanders, because they never permitted despotism to quench the spark of liberty in their breasts, but even now dare to arise and demand a recognition of their rights. No, my friends, the spirit of freedom has not been dead these five hundred years, nor disappeared with the outward forms of liberty. Through these five hundred years, the spirit of freedom has shone upon their minds and hearts like the glowing colors that tint the clouds in the evening after the sun has set. The spirit of freedom has lingered like auroral rays over the sunken Iceland,— proofs of independence, which have been developed like autumnal flowers in this unfortunate epoch of Iceland; and, in the present seventy thousand inhabitants of that far-off island, there shine no less than seventy thousand stars of liberty. Yes, my friends, there is hope beaming forth out of all this. Did not bright rays of Icelandic independence flash from the Thingvalla meeting a year ago?

“The Icelander can, like his chill and austere island, seem cold and indifferent; but in his veins the blood runs warm as the water in the geysers.

“I have only to add, that it is a great pleasure to

me to meet you in America, the land of liberty, where the banner of equal rights and of progress is unfurled to the breeze. And let me hope that you may here find for yourselves and for your children the freedom and independence, on account of the loss of which your fathers, a thousand years ago this summer, left Norway,—that freedom that your people, whom you left behind you within the ice-clad walls of your native island, are striving to re-establish. Born, as I am, an American citizen, I take the liberty to bid you, and as many of your kindred as desire to come and enjoy freedom together with us, welcome to the great and rich and independent America. Here is ample room for us all; here every one may think and speak his convictions; and here every one may worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.

“It would be exceedingly gratifying to me, if you could find a place where you could form a settlement, in order that you may be the better able to extend to each other a helping hand; but especially in order that you may be able to preserve for yourselves and for your children the dear old Icelandic language, and unite your strength in vindicating the claims of genuine Norseland speech on American soil.

“We send to-day our greeting home to ‘eyna vid norduskant’ (the isle by the North Pole).”

In connection with the notes upon this celebration, we have the views of Prof. Bjarnasson, upon the general moral and social character of his countrymen, which have been criticised, often unjustly we think, by travellers. He wrote in pure Icelandic,

and Prof. Anderson translated into English. They will have peculiar interest, from their simplicity and truthfulness, to all thoughtful minds. He says,—

“ The Icelanders, I believe, are quite as religious as the majority of the Gothic-Germanic peoples; but the religion is more of an intellectual and reflective than emotional character. Hence the Icelander is, to a great extent, a stranger to fanaticism: a cool, reasoning reflection is, on the other hand, a predominating trait in the spiritual life of the people. Many strangers have thought that the leading temperament of the Icelanders is the phlegmatic. But I think this to be a mere assertion, founded upon a superficial knowledge of the people. It cannot be denied that the Icelanders frequently appear to be quite phlegmatic; they do not, as a general thing, show their emotions very much; but, that this is far from being real, any one may convince himself by forming a more intimate acquaintance with them. I am more inclined to believe that melancholy is their predominating temperament, of course not without a considerable amount of the phlegmatic. The Icelander is, to be sure, slow to receive new impressions; but the impressions which he has received, he clings to with the greater tenacity, and is not apt to give them up before they have been properly matured in his soul. In the Sagas, this peculiar trait in the character of many Icelanders is expressed by the word ‘*tortryggr*,’ that is, slow of confidence in all that is new and strange; but also furthermore by the words ‘*tryggr ok vinfastr*,’ that is, faithful in friendship; likewise by the word ‘*langrakinn*,’ that is,

slow to forget (insults). This is a universal characteristic of the Icelandic people, and shows itself not the least in their religion. This manifested itself already at the introduction of Christianity in Iceland. The people were slow to give up heathenism ; their minds had to have time for preparation and reflection ; but, when Christianity was introduced, it was without any violence whatever. The same was the case with the reformation, although there was at this time some bloodshed. The last Catholic bishop in Iceland, Jón Areson (1550), was beheaded ; but this was caused by personal political interests, not by the change of faith. The Icelanders have never been willing to believe blindly : they must examine for themselves the doctrine which they are required to believe. On the other hand, there is no doubt that many a zealot will be inclined to accuse them of rationalism on account of their speculative, investigating nature ; but I venture to assert that true religion and genuine devotion, as compared with other peoples, is quite general in Iceland. From olden times it has been the prevailing custom, all over the land, to engage in devotional exercises every day, especially during the winter. For this purpose are used, on the week-days, various short devotional chapters from older and more modern times ; while on Sundays, and other sacred days, sermons are read from so-called house-postils on the various Gospels of the ecclesiastical year. Among these house-postils, the one written by Bishop Jón Thorkelsson Vídalín (1720) is the best on account of the heroic Christianity, unsurpassed eloquence,

thorough classical training, peculiarly northern tone of language, and glowing warmth of faith, of its author. The home-devotion in Iceland consists not only in reading, but also in singing. Both before and after the reading quite long hymns are sung. During no season of the year is family devotion considered so important as during Lent (Quadragesima) before Easter. For this time there is a special set of devotional books, treating exclusively of the sufferings of Christ. Of these books, we may especially mention fifty passion-hymns of the minister Hallgrimur Petursson (1674); a work that is universally admitted to be a perfect masterpiece of literature, which has stirred every Icelander's heart to the bottom, expressing, as it really does, the noblest and most elevated feelings of every Christian.

“The public worship always begins and ends with a prescribed prayer, which the deacon reads. The sermon ends with a general blessing and prayer.

“Children are usually baptized a few days after they are born, not in the churches, but at home, both on account of long and difficult roads to the churches, and on account of the severe and changeable weather. The youths are confirmed by the minister at the age of fourteen to sixteen, and are prepared for confirmation exclusively at home until the last year, when they are instructed by the minister. The ministers usually are present at the marriage-feasts, which are celebrated throughout the country with perhaps too great expense. Nor are funeral-feasts uncommon. There is never a funeral, unless the minister is present, who then throws three

small spades of dirt on the grave; he always speaks to the mourners in the church, and frequently also in the house of the departed one, before the coffin is taken to the graveyard. Nearly all Icelandic churches are situated in the graveyards, wherefore every corpse is brought into the church before it is buried. A solemn hymn is always sung while the grave is being filled with dirt; and, when this is done, the funeral company usually proceed into the church again, where the minister reads a prayer. This ends the ceremony."

The Millennial Jubilee was not only celebrated throughout Norway and Sweden, but also in parts of England and Germany. There was an enthusiastic celebration in Paris, and one in Rome. It was observed by Scandinavians of this country at Chicago, New York City, and noticed at Cornell University, Ithaca, besides a few other places.

We close these annals with the Norseman's love to his own colder home, expressed in lines,—

"TO MY NATIVE LAND."

The spot of earth where, from the heart of woe,
My eye first rose, and, in the purple glow
Of morning, and the dewy smile of love,
Marked the first gleamings of the Power above,—

When, wandering at its birth, my spirit rose,
Called forth from nothing by his word sublime,
To run its mighty race of joys and woes,
The proud coeval of immortal time,—

Where my first trembling accents were addressed
To lisp the dear, the unforgotten name;
And, clasped to mild affection's throbbing breast,
My spirit caught from her the kindly flame,—

My country! have I found a spot of joy,
Through the wide precincts of the checkered earth,
So calm, so sweet, so guileless of alloy,
As thou art to his soul, whose best employ
Is to recall the joys that blest his birth?

SUPPLEMENTAL CHAPTER.

Changes in Customs and Peculiarities. — Different Forms and Pronunciation of Words. — Libraries and Newspapers in Iceland. — Sporting. — Modern National Sacred Melodies.

SINCE these sketches of Iceland were in type, the interesting correspondence with our Danish and Icelandic professors at the West has furnished a few items of interest to all readers, in whose minds an abiding interest in the Norse people and language is awakened. For these, we add this supplemental section.

And here we may add, that to follow the process and dates of transition from ancient to modern customs has not been attempted; but simply an outline picture of the island during its thousand years of settlement. We give two or three illustrations. Emigrants of intelligence affirm that the form of hospitality attending "good-night," which tourists relate, does not to any extent, if at all, exist beyond, it may be, exceptional cases of familiar hospitality in the domestic sanctuary. It is also stated that the singular method of lighting the humble habitations on the Westman Islands, during the last fifty years has disappeared; and that the deadly disease which for centuries prevailed among children has yielded to medical skill, and no longer makes it impossible to rear them there.

In the spelling of Icelandic words, the best authorities in this country have been followed, instead of the pure Icelandic, or the Continental standard; although to some extent, the Norse, with the marks of accent, occurs. Consequently, that uniformity and exactness which a Scandinavian scholar might desire was quite impossible. In some future edition, while of no importance to the general reader, a closer conformity to the foreign standards of spelling and pronunciation may appear. By those foreign authorities, "Norsemen" is preferred to "Northmen," and "Norse" to "Norwegian." The termination "e" is employed instead of "i" in proper names; as "Floke" instead of "Floki," and "Bjärne" rather than "Bjärni."

"Naddoddr" is the Icelandic form of the word which is usually given "Naddodd;" "Snorri Sturluson" is Icelandic, but in Norway and Denmark the name was usually written "Snorre Sturleson;" "*Pingvellir," or "Thingvalla," on the Continent we usually find written "Thingvold." Now, it is for the reader to decide which spelling he prefers.

"Lögesägumadr," is Icelandic for "Proclaimer of Laws;" "Berserks," for "Berserkers;" "Thurid," for "Thurida;" "Thorkel," for "Thorkill;" "Vidéy," for "Vidoe;" "Skaptar-fel," for "Skaptaa-fell;" "Morter-Skegg," for "Morttar-Skegg;" "Thorgune," for "Thorgun;" and "Stiptamtadr," for "Stiptsamptonan." Hot springs referred to by travellers in certain places are said not now to exist; at least, do not send up columns of steam.

*p = th.

The Black-plague, which moved with its eclipse of death over Iceland, swept over large portions of Europe, spreading desolation in London, Venice, and other cities. There are some other items of orthography and of narrative which are matters of preference and tradition, rather than of absolute authority.

Prof. Bjarnasson, who was born in the eastern quarter of Iceland, and came to this country a year ago, gives some data which will interest those who are curious about details in regard to the original divisions and names.

“Formerly Iceland was divided into four quarters (‘Fjórdtungr,’ plur. ‘Fjórdungar’): Nordlendingafjórdungr, Sunnlendingafjórdungr, Austfirdingafjórdungr and Vestfirdingafjórdungr; the three last of which were again divided into three ‘ping’ (thing) each of them; but the Nordlendingafjórdungr into four ‘ping,’ as ‘Hbhal,’ which contained the most numerous population. The *things* of Sunnlendingafjórdungr (the south quarter) were from west to east, Kjalarsnes-ping, Árnes-ping, Pingsk ála-ping (or Rangár-ping); those of Austfirdingafjórdungr the east quarter, Skaptár-ping, Kidjafells-ping, Sunnudals-ping; those of Nordlendingafjórdungr the north quarter, Pingeyjar-ping, Vadla-ping, Hegraines-ping, Húnavatns-ping; those of Vestfirdingafjórdungr the west quarter, Porfkafjardar-ping, Pórsnes-ping, Pverárping or Pingnes-ping, each of the *things* embracing three ‘godords’ (districts of the ‘*godi*’) or more. The inhabitants of Iceland are at present seventy thousand; those of the capital

Reykjavík (reykja is gen. plur. of reykr, which means *smoke*; vík means *a small bay*), two thousand. Except Reykjavík, there are only two small cities in Iceland,—Akureyri on the north coast, and Ísafjörðr on the north-west coast. Oskjuhlid is a small, stony bluff in the near vicinity of Reykjavík. öskju, gen. sing. of askja, which means *a small round box*; a butter-box is said to have been lost there, and thence the name; hlid means a sloping hill; 'Seljadalr' is a little green valley, through which the road leads from Reykjavik to Pingvellir (thing, congress, assembly, and vellir plur. of völlr, a plain); the word 'seljadalr' means the valley ('dalr') of 'sels,' 'selja' being gen. plur. of sel, which means *a shepherd's hut* and *dairy* in a mountain pasture, in Norway called *Saeter*. There have certainly, in past times, been such *shepherd-huts* in this valley; but now there is none. I think 'Arne' in Taylor's letters must be 'Arnarfells-jökull' or 'Hofs-jökull,' a very extensive ice-plateau in about the middle of Iceland. The largest of the 'jökulls' in Iceland is the 'Vatnajökull,' the jökull of waters, in the south-east part of the country, embracing one hundred and sixty geographical square miles."

In the tales from the Sagas, the translator's orthography has been followed, with no attempt at critical revision with regard to Norse orthography or accent.

There are two libraries in Iceland, one in Reykjavík and the other in Akureyri. The one in Reykjavík is the larger, and contained in 1870 about ten thousand volumes; but the large donation of books sent from America in 1874, on the occasion of the

millennial, together with additions made from other sources, has no doubt increased it to at least twenty thousand volumes. For this library Iceland is indebted to the celebrated, enthusiastic Danish scholar, Prof. C. C. Rafn. By his untiring efforts libraries were established both in Iceland and in Thorshafn, on the Faroe Isles.

Iceland has for a long period had several newspapers.

In proportion to the number of inhabitants, the newspapers have a large circulation, owing to the fact that *all* Icelanders are not only able to read, but like to read ; and especially do they take a deep interest in all matters pertaining to their own country. There is scarcely a hamlet, be it ever so humble, where there cannot be found a political newspaper.

The two oldest papers in Iceland are "Thodolfr," "The National," and "Nordanfari," "The Northern-Farer."

"Thodolfr" has lately changed hands, and is now owned and edited by the most famous living poet of Iceland, Matthias Jochunson. This paper is excellently edited. It contains editorial leaders which manifest a patriotic interest in the affairs of Iceland ; it gives a synopsis of the most important events from the political arena of the great nations ; it furnishes correspondence from Copenhagen and London ; and criticises every thing of importance in literature, especially if in any way touching Iceland. It is printed on good paper, in clear, readable type.

"Nordanfari" is published at Akureyri, in the north of Iceland, by Björn Jonsson, and is in every

way a respectable paper, but has not the literary ability of "Thódolfr."

In the struggles against the oppression of Iceland by the Danish government, "Thodolfr" and "Nor-danfari" fearlessly defended the cause of Iceland; and these papers were supported, on one hand, by Jón Sigurdsson, a most excellent Icelander, who at present resides in Copenhagen, takes a most intense interest in the welfare of Iceland, and under his auspices is published an Icelandic annual called "Ny Fela-gerit," which of course also supported the national cause; and, on the other hand, by the very talented and energetic poet Jón Olafsson, who is now in Alaska, in company with two other Icelanders, to see whether this American possession is suitable for an Icelandic colony. This Jón Olafsson edited an able paper called "Göngu-Krolfr," but the Danish governor of the island charged him with high treason: he was found guilty by a Danish court, and fined; and, although the fine was paid by a voluntary subscription from Mr. Olafsson's friends, he still found it advisable to leave the country, and so he came to America; and his paper, as a matter of course, stopped.

A paper called "Islendingur" (The Icelander) flourished some years ago in Reykjavik; but, if the writer mistake not, it died and was buried in the year 1865 or 1866.

Then we have "Timiun" (The Times), which was started in 1871, neutral in its tendencies, and, so far as we know, still flourishing.

Finally "Vikverji" was started in 1873, and took a

decided position in favor of the Danish government. What the political tendencies of that paper now are we cannot say with absolute certainty, but we should judge that it has taken sides with the national party ; for, from a letter written by the poet Jón Olafsson, it seems that he is a correspondent for it. It may, therefore, be inferred that Danish governmentism is a "lost cause" in Iceland.

There are, besides these political papers, a couple of literary magazines that do the Icelanders marked credit ; and a considerable number of books are published in Reykjavik, the famous capital of Iceland. Thus it will be seen that the Icelanders, in proportion to their numerical strength, need not be ashamed of their periodical literature.

Of the ecclesiastical annals, which include so largely general history, Prof. Bjarnasson says, —

"The precious 'Historia Ecclesiastica Islandiae' (i.-iii. tomi, 4to. Havniae, about 1775) by Finnur Jónsson (Finnus Johannaeus), bishop of Skálholt diocese in Iceland, 1789, is indispensable ; but that work, written in Latin, is very difficult to get. This work has been continued after the death of its author, until almost the middle of this century, by the Rev. Pétur Pétursson, the present bishop of Iceland, 'Historia Ecclesiastica Isl.', one volume 4to., edited in Copenhagen, about the year 1840."

Formerly, Iceland was divided into two dioceses : that of Hólar embracing the northern quarter, and that of Skálholt embracing the eastern, southern, and western quarters of the country.

At the beginning of this century, the two dioceses

were combined; and the names of the Icelandic bishops, residing at Reykjavik or in the vicinity of it, are as follows:—

Geir Jónsson Vídalín, 1823, Steingrímur Jónsson, 1836, Helgi Gudmundarson Thordersen, 1867, and since then, Pétur Pétursson.

To the sportsman who is not of delicate constitution, nor nice about accommodations, Iceland is a paradise. There are reindeer, the white and blue fox, wild fowl, and fish. At Myvatn fifty brace of the ptarmigan have been "bagged" in a single day.

The fishing is nowhere surpassed, and is free to any one "who cares to pursue the gentle craft." Disciples of Izaak Walton have "killed nineteen fish in three hours, weighing thirty-nine pounds." Salmon, trout, and char are favorite game, and may be caught with minnows and flies; of the latter the *grilse* is the best.

Expenses of travelling in Iceland will vary, as everywhere, according to one's means, and the freedom with which they are expended; but will average about three dollars per day. The ponies may be purchased or hired, the latter method being the least expensive if well managed.

The tour of Baring-Gould, from London through the western and northern portions of Iceland, during the months of June and July, 1862, including his voyages from London and back, cost him a hundred pounds, or five hundred dollars of our money.

He says of his farewell, "I was sorry to leave Iceland; for I had spent many happy days in it, and had learned to feel a very strong attachment to the wildly beautiful island."

Commander Forbes, R.N., closes his annals with similar expressions of admiring interest: "Though my sojourn in the far north may be only reckoned by weeks, the open-hearted hospitality which everywhere welcomed me, from the governor to the peasant, had converted those weeks into years, as regards identifying myself with their island-home, and the many sympathies which their peculiar position demands. For, in world-wide experience of wandering by sea and land, I have seldom met a community less influenced by ulterior objects, or whose innate ingenuousness more commended itself at first sight; for their very weaknesses deserve to be tenderly considered, and certainly, as a Britisher, I felt no right to throw stones. And it was with feelings of poignant regret that I mechanically followed my portmanteau to the steamer, and turned my back on Iceland."

We have received from Prof. Bjarnasson Icelandic national melodies, whose serious undertone is entirely characteristic of the people. He says of them:—

"The first and second of them are old national ones; and, as for the best of those hymns, they are both funeral, the former always being sung while the grave is filled up with earth. The author of that hymn is the most celebrated of all Icelandic psalmists, the Rev. Hallgrímur Pétursson (1864). The third melody is composed by my father-in-law, Pétur Guðjónsson, organist at the cathedral of Reykjavík, who also has harmonized the other two. He is the author of an Icelandic choral book ("Islenzk sálma söngs-og messubók." Kaupsmannahöfn, 1861). I only send

these melodies to you as specimens of Icelandic church-music. There are not a few of the same kind. As you see, those melodies are rendered in the thorough bass. I send you a prose version of the first of those hymns, which I have translated into Norwegian (Danish), that you might get an idea of the contents of one genuine Icelandic hymn."

We give specimens, introducing the first with two stanzas in the original. Prof. Anderson has made a literal translation, without an attempt at metrical arrangement.

I.

"Allt eins og blómstrid eina."

1.

Ligesom den fagre og frodige Blomst, der tidlig i Morgenstunden fremspiger paa Marken, i et Oieblik afmeies og med det samme nedlägger sine farvede Blade, saaledes ender det menneskelige Liv i en Hast.

2.

Saaledes iler saavel den spæde Ungdom som dem mödige Alderdom henad Dödens dunkle Vei. Alling skrider frem paa den samme Bane. Fntet Menneske har modtaget Pant paa sin Levetids Forlængelse, lvertimod have Alle maattet forpligte sig til at gaae herfra.

SONG NO. 1.

As the fair and flourishing flower, that early in the morning hour shoots forth in the field, in a moment is cut down, and immediately sheds its gorgeous leaves, thus human life suddenly ends.

It therefore truly seems to me, that death may be likened unto an energetic reaper, who cuts down all that comes before him, and regards the green herbs, the beautiful, shining flower, the reeds, the rushes, and the fair roses, the one as valueless as the other.

Human life hastens, without delay, onward to the outstretched arms of cruel death; and the prey is received in the grave. The ways of all the world lead to the same end. Willing or unwilling, one must go, whether it be with pleasure or sadness.

Neither by my station, nor by my power, have I maintained my life. The soul is as a loan, united with the body. It is in the

power of the Lord to call back to himself what belongs to him. We may therefore say that death is a messenger, who shall bring back what belongs to the Creator.

I know my kind Saviour lives in heaven. He rules all things. Jesus, he the true victor of death, died himself on the cross, on which he gave me a sure hope.

By this death he slew death, and gained victory. He destroyed the mighty power of death. Nothing can harm me: although my body is laid in the earth, my soul will live and be free. In the happiness of heaven, no harm can come to it.

Jesus lives in my memory. Whether I am out or in, whether I wake or sleep, I give myself into his power. He is my strength and support. He is my real life. In him will I confide with all my heart. He alleviates the pain of death.

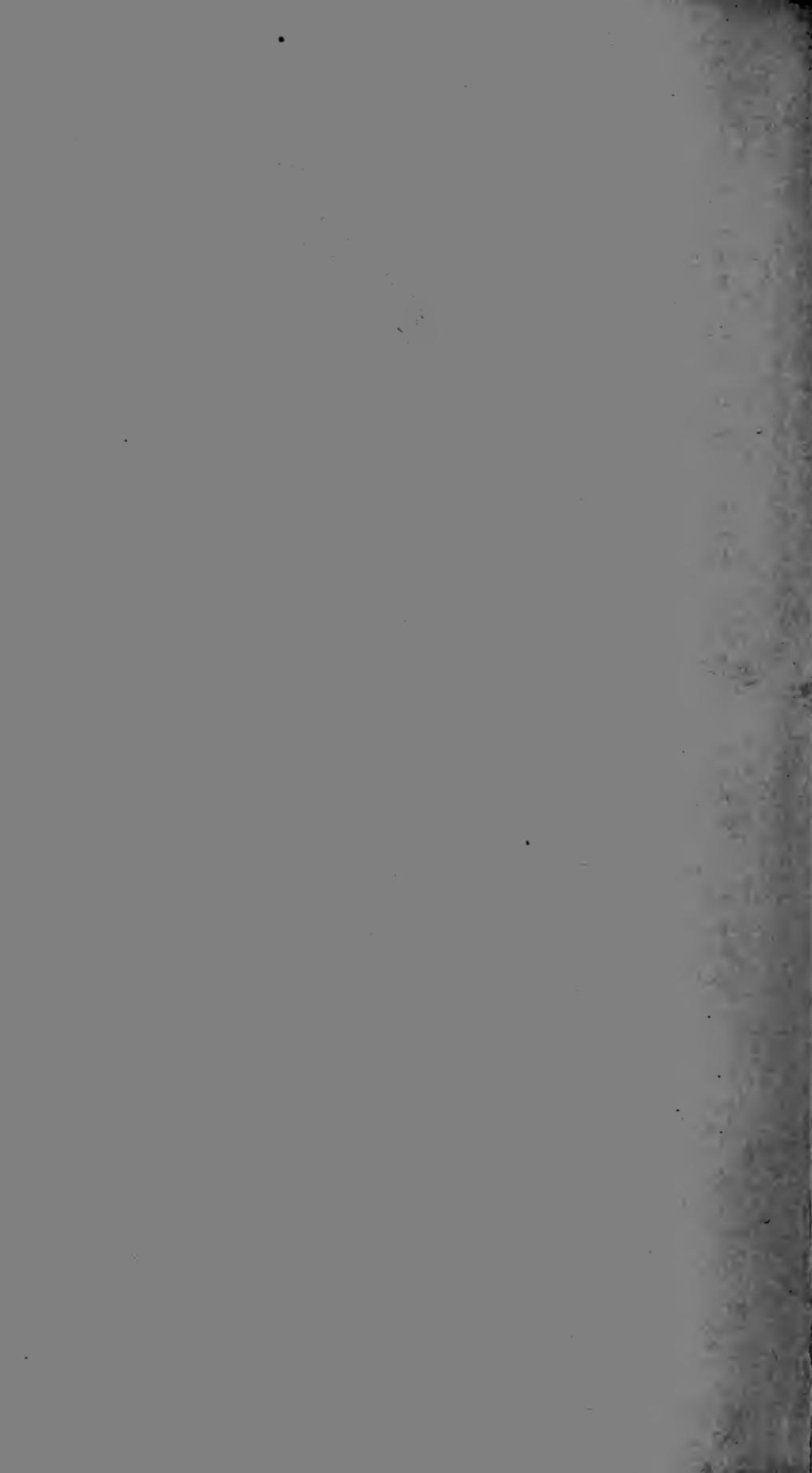
I live and die in the name of Jesus. Although health and life depart from me, I fear not death. Death, I am not alarmed at thy mighty power. With the power of Christ, I exclaim, Be welcome when thou comest!

II. FIRST STANZA.

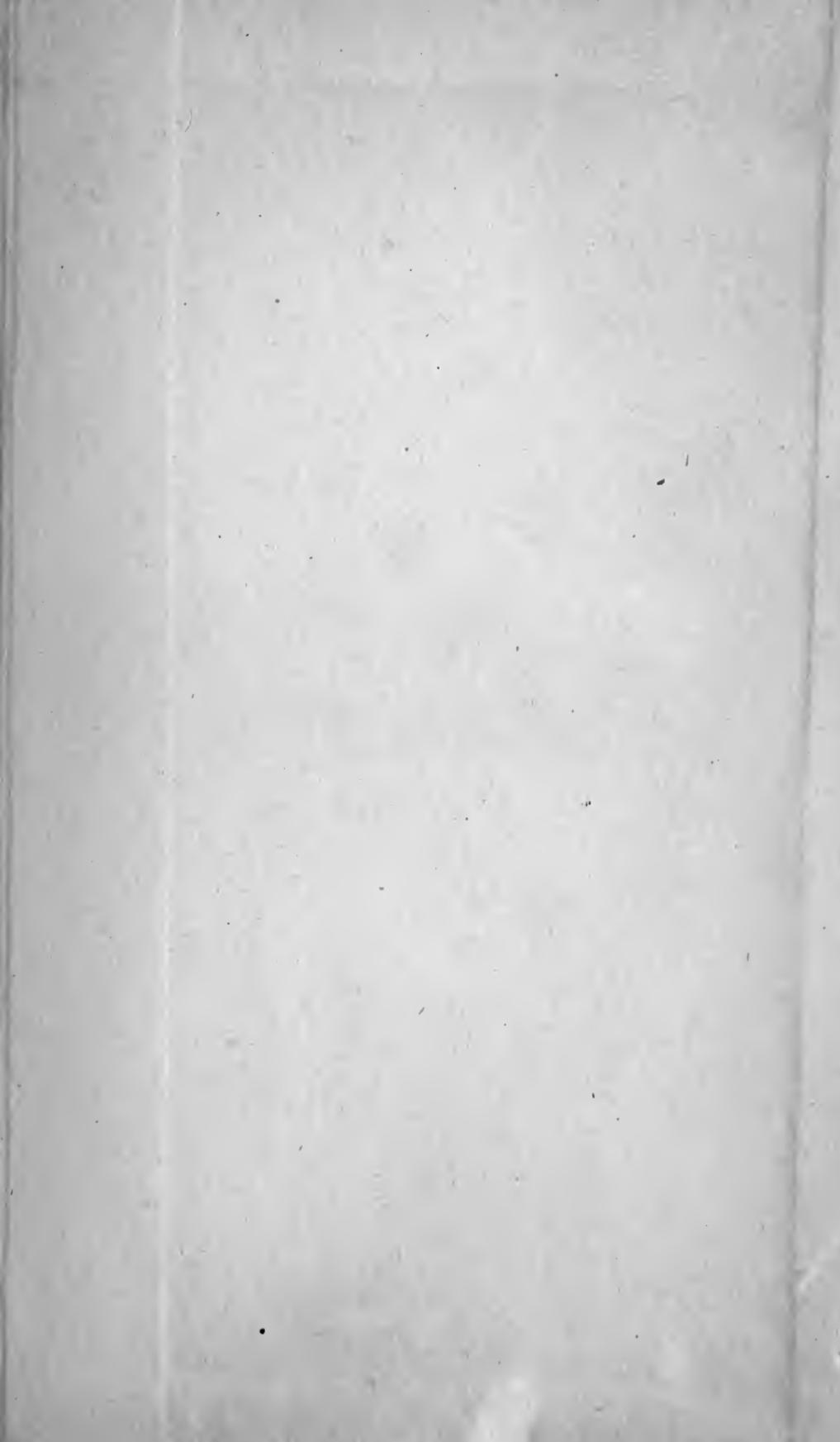
Let me, O Lord, each day remember death; and let me never forget that my time approaches its end. Enlighten my heart, my Lord! that I may fear thy judgment, which will be rendered on the last day. Praise God, praise him all who can! All nations, gladly honor him!

III. FIRST STANZA.

All men, in all lands, praise Jehovah always. Honor the Lord of hosts every day. As his mercies are known unto the races of the earth, he will not forget the inhabitants of this land. He is firm and steadfast in his love to us. All that can stir the breath, honor him. All that is born, honor him and praise him. Amen.







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 028 111 878 A